Mahāvīra

His Times and His Philosophy of Life

Dr. Hiralal Jain, Dr. A.N. Upadhye



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Foreword

On the auspicious occasion of 2500th Nirvāṇa Year of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, it is the privilege of Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha to publish this book, *Mahāvīra : His Times and His Philosophy of Life,* written by the two eminent Indologists and Jainologists of our times, late Dr. Hiralal Jain and Dr. A.N. Upadhye. This is, in fact, an edited collection of two separte pieces; one, the English translation of an essay written in Hindi by Dr. Hiralal Jain, as a preface to *Vīra-Jiṇiṁda-cariu* and the other, a speech by Dr. A.N. Upadhye delivered to a gathering of distinguished persons under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Culture, Bangalore. Though the two pieces were written and conceived differently, they make an excellent unit covering different aspects connoted by the title of the book. A careful eye, however, will not fail to see slight repetition, here and there, which is bound to occur under the circumstances.

We have long been wanting to see a book on Mahāvīra which would be comprehensive enough to cover all the essentials, and yet not too technical to tax the understanding of the general reader. This publication seems to be the best answer so far. Its special virtue is that it presents Bhagavān Mahāvīra's biographical particulars without any sectarian overtones; the common human problems of his times in conjunction with those faced by Buddha; and the tenets of Mahāvīra's philosophy as they were and are ever relevant to the past and the present generations. To harmonise authors' intellectual authenticity with a devout reader's acceptability is a work of distinction.

This publication might not have come into being had not Shri Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain, Founder Trustee of Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha, felt keenly that since the question of an agreed biography of Bhagavān Mahāvīra proposed to be published under the aegis of Bhagavān Mahāvīra 2500th Nirvāṇa Mahotsava Mahāsamiti continues to elude solution due to diversity and varied interpretation of the basic material, this book in the meantime, is likely to serve the best purpose as the learned and experienced authors have consciously tried to achieve historical objectivity. May it be so.

I have every hope that this book, small as it is, will fill a longfelt need and will serve as a friendly guide to all those who want to know for themselves and to convey to the multitudes the immortal life and message of Mahāvīra.

Delhi
13th November, 1974

Lakshmi Chandra Jain
Secretary,
Bharatiya Jnanpith

General Editorial

At a time, when the human race, despite its scientific and technological achievements, is caught in the grips of want, scarcity, suspicion, misunderstanding, conflicts, terrorism and war, there is being celebrated everywhere the 2500th anniversary of the Nirvāṇa of Bhagavān Mahāvīra, one of the greatest humanists the civilised world has ever produced. The highest value which he set for judging human behaviour is man's reverence for life in all its forms: no violence is to be intended, expressed or inflicted through thought, word or act on any living being. This is known as *ahiṁsā*. Similarly, though a prince by birth, Mahāvīra adopted a mode of living with minimum attachment for the world and its ties. He controlled his desires and put limits to his needs; thus he found solutions to various problems of life and death. Not only he preached non-attachment but he lived a life which fully illustrated what it means.

His preachings are meant for one and all who seek guidance from him. Intellectual tolerance, i.e., appreciation of the point of view of others, is the hallmark of his philosophy.

It is necessary that authentic details about Mahāvīra and his times, and about his outlook on life are presented so that we understand him better and try to put his principles in practical life to the best of our ability. With this objective in view, here is presented a brochure, *Mahāvīra : His Times and His Philosophy of Life*. It contains two essays which are supplementary to each other with very little common details.

The first is by the late Dr. Hiralal Jain. He wrote it in Hindi by way of Introduction to his edition of the *Vīra-jiṇiṁda-cariu*

published by the Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha. This is rendered into English by his colleague Dr. A.N. Upadhye and presented here.

The second essay is by Dr. A.N. Upadhye. It is practically the same as his lecture delivered under the auspices of the Indian Institute of Culture, Bangalore, some years back. Both these essays are serious studies, and it is hoped that they would be welcome to the English knowing public for appreciating and understanding the personality and philosophy of Mahāvīra.

On behalf of our colleague, the late Dr. Hiralal Jain, and ourselves, we offer our sincere gratitude to Smt. Rama Jain, the President of Bhāratīya Jñānapīṭha and to Shriman Sahu Shanti Prasadji, the benign founder of it. We are thankful to Shri L.C. Jain for his speedy arrangements to publish this book.

Mahāvīra Nirvāṇa Day
November 13, 1974

A.N. Upadhye
Kailash Chandra Shastri

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MAHĀVĪRA AND HIS TIMES

1. Background of Mahāvīra's Tīrthakarahood

Bhagavān Mahāvīra is a Tīrthakara in Jainism. According to Jaina historical tradition, he is neither the first promulgator of Jainism nor the last for all the time to come.

There have been Tīrthakaras from beginningless time, and they will be there in future too. There would be specialities of the *dharma* preached by them to suit the time; and, at the same time, there would be consistent continuity of the same. The first Tīrthakara of the present age is Ṛṣabhanātha. He is mentioned, as a rule, not only in all the Jaina *purāṇas*, but also in ancient scriptures of India like the *Ṛgveda* etc. in different contexts.[1]

The lives of twentyfour Tīrthakaras, beginning with Ṛṣabha and ending with Mahāvīra, are described in due details in the Jaina *purāṇas*.[2]

As though to maintain uniformity and to express common spirit of religious, doctrinal and philosophical ideology, the series of Mahāvīra's earlier births are linked with Ṛṣabhadeva. Bharata, son of Ṛṣabha, was the first Cakravartin; and it is from him that our country got the name Bhārata-varṣa.

[1] *Ṛgveda* 10, 102, 6; 10, 136; 10, 166; 2.33. *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* 4, 6. *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* 3, 18 etc. The mention of Vṛṣabha, Keśī and Vāta-raśana Digambara monks deserves special attention.

[2] *Samavāyāṅga-sūtra* 246 ff. *Kalpa-sūtra*. Hemacandra's *Triṣaṣṭi-śalākā-puruṣa-carita*. *Tiloya-paṇṇattī*, *'mahādhikāra'* 4. Jinasena's *Adi-purāṇa*. Guṇabhadra's *Uttara-purāṇa*. Puṣpadanta's *Mahāpurāṇu* (Apabhramsa).

This is unanimously accepted in all the Vedic *purāṇas*.[3] This very Bharata had a son, Marīci by name.

Even this prince Marīci represented the soul of a hunter, who, giving up his usual profession of killing animals, had accepted the vow of *ahiṁsā*, i.e., abstention from harm unto living beings. He had taken *dīkṣā*, i.e., renunciation, from Ṛṣabha-deva; but he could not carry out the severe practices of a monk prescribed to him by the first Tīrthakara, so he ceased to maintain the status of a monk.

He possessed, however, the potential seed of religion and consequent incentive for its pursuit. He passed, therefore, through various births of gods and men; and he was born, at last, as the Tīrthakara Mahāvīra. Thus it will be easily seen that the spiritual heritage of Mahāvīra, the last Tīrthakara, stands firmly linked with Ṛṣabha-deva, the first Tīrthakara.[4]

The succession of Tīrthakaras does not come to an end with Mahāvīra. Mahāvīra had a disciple in one of the then kings of India, Śreṇika Bimbasāra, in whom he invested the seed of religion.

Though Śreṇika was destined to go to hell on account of his past sins, still, like Marīci, he would, in his next birth, head a new series of Tīrthakaras of the future; in fine, he would be born as Mahāpadma, the first of the twentyfour Tīrthakaras of the future.

Thus, taking an overall view, the fact stands firmly founded in the Jaina tradition that just as Mahāvīra, as a historical person, is the last Tīrthakara of the pre-*purāṇic* tradition, he is, as well, the first to inaugurate a new succession of Tīrthakaras.[5]

[3] *Bhāgavata-purāṇa* 5, 4, 9; 11, 2. *Viṣṇu-purāṇa* 2, 1, 31. *Vāyu-purāṇa* 33, 52. *Agni-purāṇa* 107, 11-12. *Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa* 14, 5, 62. *Liṅga-purāṇa* 1, 47, 23. *Skanda-purāṇa, 'Kaumāra-khaṇḍa'* 37, 57. *Mārkaṇḍeya-purāṇa* 50, 41. In these sources it is clearly mentioned that it is from Bharata, the son of Ṛṣabha, that this country got the name Bhārata-varṣa.

[4] *Mahāpurāṇa* (Skt.), *parvan* 74. *Mahāpurāṇu* (Apabhramsa); *saṁdhi* 95.

[5] *Mahāpurāṇa* (Sanskrit) 76, 471-77.

2. Life of Mahāvīra : Birth and Boyhood

The biography of Mahāvīra found in Jaina literature may be presented thus in short. Mahāvīra was born in a royal family of Kṣatriyas. His father was Siddhārtha and his mother, Priyakāriṇī. Sidhārtha's *gotra* was Kāśyapa, and the paternal *gotra* of Triśalā is mentioned as Vaśiṣṭha. Triśalā was the eldest daughter (and according to another tradition, sister) of king Cetaka of Vaiśālī.[6]

Mahāvīra spent his childhood and boyhood in such caresses and taking such education as was common in contemporary royal families. Among his sports of boyhood, there is even a traditional story that he brought under control a terrific serpent. Consequently and symbolic of this feat of bravery, he got the title Mahāvīra and Vīra-nātha. This episode reminds one of Kṛṣṇa overpowering the serpent Kāliya.

3. Mahāvīra's Penances

Mahāvīra accepted renunciation at the age of thirty. It means that he left home, retired to the park, Jñātṛkhaṇḍa-vana, close to Kuṇḍapura, and relinquished his ornaments and clothes. He pulled out his hair by his hands, observed fast for three days, and then plunged himself into meditation. After some time, he started touring various parts of the country.

He lived in gardens and parks; but, as required by the rules of his vows and fasts, he entered a town or a village once in a day and accepted the food offered to him. In a standing or squatting posture, and with his eyes fixed on the tip of nose, he spent his time in meditation and in reflecting on the *ātman* and in cultivating the attitude of equanimity towards one and all.

His routine involved not even a trace of violence to living beings, not to deprive others of even a blade of grass belonging to them, not to speak lie even remotely, not to

[6] *Mahāpurāṇa* (Sanskrit) 74, 288-95. *Mahāpurāṇu* (Apabhraṁśa) 96, 10, 10-15. *Bhāgavata-purāṇa, daśama-skandha.*

entertain any sex appetite, even in mind, and not to have any possession of worldly goods. These were his five Great Vows. Along with the practice of these negative vows or restraints, he got himself habituated to endure with peace and patience all such physical and mental tortures, known as *parīṣaha*, like hunger, thirst, cold, heat, mosquito-fly bites etc. which naturally a monk, who has no home, no shelter, no clothes on body and no worldly provisions, has to face.

4. Mahāvīra's Omniscience

Mahāvīra spent twelve years as an ascetic, practising these various austerities. One day, while he was seated, plunged in meditation, close to the village, Jṛmbhaka by name, on the bank of the river Ṛju-kūlā, omniscience or all-knowledge (which has no limitations of time and space) dawned on him. In simple terms it means that he got satisfactory solutions for all those problems and questions, connected with the life and the universe, which occur to any inquisitive soul. He fully comprehended the six substances *(dravya)* and seven principles *(tattva)* whereby gets explained the nature of all the objects and their activities. The six *dravyas* are: *jīva*, *pudgala*, *dharma*, *adharma*, *ākāśa* and *kāla*; and the seven *tattvas* are: *jīva*, *ajīva*, *āsrava*, *bandha*, *saṁvara*, *nirjarā* and *mokṣa*.

The very basic principle of life is *jīva* or the *ātma-tattva* which is different from matter; it is characterised by consciousness and is capable of cognising itself and others; and it is immaterial and eternal. But it is found conjoined with matter, accommodated in the body, assuming various forms of life and wandering through different lives (in the transmigratory career).

All the concrete objects, perceptible by sense-organs, from the primary atom to the *mahā-skandha*, are different forms of *pudgala*. *Dharma* and *adharma* (principles of motion and rest) are such subtle, unseen and immaterial principles as serve the mediums of motion and rest for the *jīvas* and *pudgalas*.

Ākāśa or space gives location and accommodation to all other substances; while *kāla* or time marks their present state, their changes, and gives rise to the notions of earlier and later.

This is an exposition of the principles or realities that constitute the universe.

One has to understand the seven *tattvas* in order to grasp the phases of happiness and misery to which the soul is subjected here and how it can evolve itself to its pristine purity, enlightenment and freedom after removing its foreign shackles. *Jīva* (life) and *ajīva* (non-life) are the basic constituents or principles of the universe. Their mutual contact is *āsrava* or *karmic* influx.

It is this contact which results into such bondage (or *karma-bandha* as it is called) as eclipses the pure nature of *ātman* and suppresses its inherent qualities of *jñāna* and *darśana* (knowledge and perception). The hindrance to and stoppage of *karmic* bondage of the *ātman* through self-restraint and other virtues is known as *saṁvara*. It is through the practice of certain vows and penances that the stock of *karmic* bondage is worn out and exhausted: this is called *nirjarā*. When this process of exhausting the *karmic* bondage is completed and the *jīva* attains its pure nature, it becomes *mukta* or liberated, and is said to have attained *nirvāṇa*.

Thus it is seen that this comprehensive exposition of *jīva* and *ajīva* covers the field of physics and ontology; *āsrava* and *bandha* cover psychological analysis; the discussion about *saṁvara* and *nirjarā* pervades moral and ethical code; and the nature of *mokṣa* depicts the highest ideal of life and spiritual evolution. *Kevala-jñāna* includes the subtle and comprehensive nature of the entire field of knowledge.

5. Mahāvīra : His Religious Sermons

After attaining omniscience, Lord Mahāvīra came to Rājagṛha, the capital of Magadha, and took a worthy seat on the mount Vipulācala. The audience-hall and pendal were constructed;

and the royalty and the subjects flocked to him to hear his religious sermons. He propounded to the audience the principles noted above and also the *aṇu-vratas* for the laity and *mahāvratas* for the monks whereby the blissful ideal of life can be reached.

6. Literature Based on Mahāvīra's Teachings

Lord Mahāvīra had eleven chief disciples such as Indrabhūti Gautama, Sudharman, Jambū etc.; and they were known as Gaṇadharas. They have incorporated all his teachings in twelve *aṅgas*, which are as below:

(1) *Ācārāṅga* : It presents the rules and regulations on the life of a monk. Its place in Jainism is something like the *Vinaya-piṭaka* in Buddhism.

(2) *Sūtra-kṛtāṅga* : It sets forth Jaina doctrines as well as resume and discussion of the contemporary creeds like *kriyā-vāda*, *akriyā-vāda*, *niyati-vāda* etc.

(3) *Sthānāṅga* : Here certain topics and their subdivisions are enumerated according to their numbers. For instance, *darśana*, *cāritra*, *samaya*, *pradeśa*, *paramāṇu* etc. are one each. *Kriyā* is of two kinds: *jīva-kriyā* and *ajīva-kriyā*. Further *jīva-kriyā* is of two kinds: *samyaktva-kriyā* and *mithyātva-kriyā*. Likewise *ajīva-kriyā* is of two kinds: *īryā-pathika* and *sāmparāyika*, etc.

(4) *Samavāyāṅga* : Here certain topics are discussed according to the number of their divisions and subdivisions as in the *Sthānāṅga*. But here number is not limited to ten only as in the *Sthānāṅga*, but reaches even hundred and thousand. Thus the nature of both these *aṅgas* resembles the *Aṅguttara-nikāya* of the *Tri-piṭaka*.

(5) *Vyākhyā-prajñapti* : This discusses topics of Jaina philosophy and ethics in the forms of questions and answers.

(6) *Nāyā-dhamma-kahā* : Usually this title is rendered into Sanskrit as *Jñātṛ-dharma-kathā* and it is taken to indicate that this work contains religious tales narrated by Jñātṛ-putra Mahāvīra. But it is equally possible that the Sanskrit form of

this Prakrit title originally stood as *Nyāya-dharma-kathā*. And it possibly contained *nyāyas* or short maxims of worldly wisdom and morality duly illustrated by tales; such a surmise of its possible contents need not be surprising.

(7) *Upāsak-ādhyayana* : In this work were explained the *vratas* or vows of the *upāsakas* or lay followers, the householders or *śrāvakas* through the biographies of such of them as followed them. Thus, this *aṅga* can be called a supplement to the first *aṅga*, namely, the *ācārāṅga*, which expounded the rules for monks.

(8) *Antakd-daśā :* According to Jaina terminology *antakṛt* are those monks who attain *nirvāṇa* after putting an end to this *saṁsāra* by practising severe penances and patiently bearing various troubles. It appears that such ten monks were described in this *aṅga*.

(9) *Anuttar-aupapātika-daśā* : *Anuttara* is a name for those higher heavens in which highly merited souls are born. From there they take only one birth as man; and then by observing the necessary religious practices they attain liberation in the same birth. In this *aṅga* were given the biographies of such ten great monks and residents of Anuttara heavens.

(10) *Praśna-vyākaraṇa :* As indicated by title this *aṅga* contained questions and answers on different creeds and doctrines; and thus in a way it was a supplement of the *Vyākhyā-prajñapti*.

(11) *Vipāka-sūtra : Vipāka* means the fruit of *karmans*. According to the *karman* doctrine good *karmans* give fruits in the form of enjoyment of pleasures and the bad ones, suffering or pains. This was explained in this *aṅga* with suitable illustrations.

(12) *Dṛṣṭi-vāda :* This had five divisions: *Parikarma*, *Sūtra*, *Pūrva-gata*, *Anuyoga* and *Cūlikā*. *Parikarma* contained calculatory science, and the *Sūtra* included discussions about creeds and doctrines. The *Pūrva-gata* contained fourteen subdivisions: (1) *Utpāda-pūrva*, (2) *Agrāyaṇīya*, (3) *Vīry-ānuvāda*, (4) *Asti-nāsti-pravāda*, (5) *Jñāna-pravāda*, (6) *Satya-pravāda*, (7) *Ātma-pravāda*, (8) *Karma-pravāda*, (9) *Pratyākhyāna*, (10) *Vidy-*

ānuvāda, (11) *Kalyāṇa-vāda*, (12) *Prāṇāvāya*, (13) *Kriyā-viśāla* and (14) *Loka-bindu-sāra*.

As indicated by their names, they contained discussions about doctrines and principles. The eighth *Pūrva*, *Karma-pravāda*, has a special importance, because it appears to have been the source on the basis of which has grown the entire subsequent literature about the *karma* philosophy which is the vital doctrine of Jainism. The designation *Purva-gata* signifies that the tradition of their contents belongs to a period earlier than Mahāvīra who possibly improved on it in the light of his fundamental doctrines.

The fourth division of the *Dṛṣṭi-vāda*, namely *Anuyoga*, too has an important place in Jaina literature. It is also called *Pratham-āuyoga*; and the entire *purāṇic* narratives, religious biographies as well as illustrative tales etc. are all included under the *Pratham-ānuyoga*. According to the *Dhavalā* commentary on the *Ṣaṭ-khaṇḍ-āgama* (*sūtra* 1, 1, 2), *Pratham-ānuyoga* contained twelve sections of the *purāṇa* in which were described respectively, Arhats, Cakravartins, Vidyādharas, Vāsudevas, Cāraṇas, Prajñā-śramaṇas, as well as the families of Kuru, Hari, Ikṣvāku,Kāśyapa, Vādi (Cedi?) and Nātha.

According to the Digambara tradition, the entire *Aṅga* literature, in its original form, was gradually lost into oblivion. After the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra, during the period of 162 years, it is only eight saints that had the full knowledge of *Aṅgas*. The last among them is said to have been Śruta-kevalin Bhadrabāhu.

After him the knowledge of all the *Aṅgas* and *Pūrvas* went on gradually decreasing day-to-day; and during the 7th century after the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra a stage was reached when only some great saints had a partial knowledge of these *Aṅgas* and *Pūrvas*. It is on the basis of this that the entire Jaina scriptures and *purāṇas* came to be composed independently in a new style in Prakrit and other languages current in different places and at different times.

According to the Śvetāmbara tradition, during the 10th century after the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra, a council of monks

was convened at Valabhi (modern Vala) in Gujarat; and there, under the chairmanship of Devarddhi-gaṇi-Kṣamā-śramaṇa, eleven out of the twelve *Aṅgas* were compiled, and they are available today. This compilation, however, has not been found to have preserved entirely the original form of the work. One can clearly see additions and omissions in the contents.

Their language too is not the same Ardha-Māgadhī as was used in the time of Mahāvīra : it displays linguistic features which developed in a period one thousand years later than him. Still, broadly speaking, the available texts testify to the antiquity of the contents and method of exposition. They bear close resemblance with the ancient Buddhist literature. Just as the Buddhist canon was *Tri-piṭaka*, the Jaina canon is found to be described as *Gaṇi-piṭaka*.

This branch of literature, as a whole, is called *Aṅga-praviṣṭa* to be distinguished from *Aṅga-bāhya* texts, 14 in number, which deal, in details, with the conduct and day-to-day routine of monks. Their names are : (1) *Sāmāyika*, (2) *Caturviṁśati-stava*, (3) *Vandanā*, (4) *Pratikramaṇa*, (5) *Vainayika*, (6) *Kṛti-karman*, (7) *Daśa-vaikālika*, (8) *Uttar-ādhyayana*, (9) *Kalpa-vyavahāra*, (10) *Kalp-ākalpa*, (11) *Mahā-kalpa*, (12) *Puṇḍarīka*, (13) *Mahā-puṇḍarīka* and (14) *Niṣiddhikā*.

Their titles themselves indicate that their contents are related with instructions about religious practics, especially the routine of duties of monks. Though these fourteen texts, in their ancient form, are not found independently, still their contents have got mixed up with other texts; and they are being used by monks even to this day.

The council of monks which compiled the canon at Valabhi has, besides the first category of 11 *Aṅgas*: 12 *Upāṅgas* (*Aupapātika*, *Rāya-paseṇiya* etc.); 6 *Cheda-sūtras* (*Niśītha*, *Mahā-niśītha* etc.); 4 *Mūla-sūtras* (*Uttar-ādhyayana*, *Āvaśyaka* etc); 10 *Prakīrṇakas* (*Catuḥśaraṇa ātura-pratyākhyāna*, etc.); and 2 *Cūlikā-ṣūtras* (*Anuyoga-dvāra* and Nandī). Thus the entire Ardha-Māgadhī canon has got 45 texts, and they have a religious sanction or authority for the Śvetāmbara sect. This entire

branch of literature is as much important as the Pāli canon for its language and style and for the philosophical and historical material contained therein.[7]

7. Date of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa

As to the time of the *nirvāṇa* of Lord Mahāvīra, a clear-cut record is available that this event took place in the last quarter of the night of the *caturdaśī* of the *kṛṣṇa-pakṣa* of the month of Kārtika, i.e., in the early hours of the *amāvāsyā*; and both gods and men celebrated this occasion as the Dīpāvali festival. Accordingly, the (Mahā)Vīra N. *saṁvat* era begins from the Kārtika Dīpāvali.

There was no such *saṁvat* or era specified either contemporary with Mahāvīra or for a long time after him. References to this era, which are noticed in later works, are often mutually contradictory here and there and also not consistent with the data available in other branches of literature and with other historical events.

Consequently there have resulted differences of opinions in this connection among modern scholars. On the one hand, the German scholar Dr. Jacobi puts the date of the *nirvaṇa* of Mahāvīra as 477 (four hundred seventyseven) B.C. His evidence is that the coronation of Maurya Candragupta took place in 322 (three hundred twentytwo) B.C., and this event, according to the *Pariśiṣṭa-parvan* (VIII. 339) of Hemacandra happened 155 (one hundred fiftyfive) years after the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra : thus the date of Mahāvīra's *nirvāṇa* comes to be 322 + 155 = 477.

But, on the other hand, Dr. Kashi Prasad Jayaswal holds the view that, according to the Buddhist tradition in Ceylon or

[7] *Samavāy-āṅga-sūtra* 211-227. *Ṣaṭ-khaṇḍ-āgama* 1, 1, 2, *ṭikā*, *bhāga* 1, page 96 ff. Winternitz : *A History of Indian Literature*, II Jaina Literature. Kapadia : *History of the Jaina Canonical Literature*. Jagadish Chandra : *Prākṛta Sāhitya kā Itihāsa*, pp. 33 ff. Hiralal Jaina : *Bhāratiya Saṁskṛti-men Jaina-dharma-kā Yoga-dāna*, pp. 55 ff. Nemichandra Shastri : *Prākṛta Bhāṣā aura Sāhitya-kā Ālocanātmaka Itihāsa*, pp. 157 ff.

Srilanka. Buddha's *nirvānā* is put in 544 B.C. And in the *Sāmagāma-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* and elsewhere in the *Tri-piṭaka* it is stated that Buddha learnt the news from one of his followers that Mahāvīra's *nirvāṇa* took place in Pāvā. There is also the tradition that Buddha's *nirvāṇa* occurred two years later: thus it is concluded that Mahāvīra's *nirvaṇa* be put in 546 B.C. But, on scrutiny, both the views are not valid.

There is a clear-cut ancient Jaina literary and historical tradition that the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra took place 470 (four hundred seventy) years before Vikrama *saṁvat* and 605 (six hundred and five) years before the Śaka era. The succession of the historical events of this tradition stands thus: That very night, when Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa*, king Pālaka of Ujjaina was coronated. Pālaka ruled for 60 years. After him the Nanda kings ruled for 155 years; Mauryas for 108 years; Puṣyamitra for 30 years; Balamitra and Bhānumitra for 60 years; Nahapāna (Nahavāna, Naravāhana or Nahasena) for 40 years; Gardabhilla for 13 years; another king ruled for 4 years; and, it is after this that the Vikrama era started. Hence the period between the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra and the beginning of the Vikrama era stands thus: 60 + 155 + 108 + 30 + 60 + 40 + 13 + 4 = 470 years.

The authority of Hemacandra on the basis of which Dr. Jacobi accepted the period between the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra and the coronation of Candraguta Maurya to be 155 years, is really speaking, not at all correct. Dr. Jacobi himself has edited the *Pariśiṣṭa-parvan*; and he has recorded his view that this work contains many lapses, because it was composed in haste.

One of such lapses is that, while calculating the period between the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra and the coronation of Candragupta, assigning 60 years for Pālaka is skipped over. So by adding 60 years the period becomes 215 instead of 155. That this was a mistake is borne out by the period of time assigned to Kumārapāla by Hemacandra himself in his *Triṣaṣṭi-ślākā-puruṣa-carita* (*parvan* 10, *sarga* 12, verses 45-56)

that this king was coronated 169 years after the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra. It is evident from other authorities that Kumārapāla's coronation took place in 1142 A.D. Thus Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa* in 1669 – 1142 = 527 B.C.

Dr. Jayaswal accepted 544 B.C. for Buddh's *nirvāṇa* on the basis of Ceylonese tradition, but it is no more confirmed by other evidences. According to the earlier Ceylonese tradition, the Mauryan emperor Aśoka came to the throne 218 years after the *nirvāṇa* of Buddha.

There is plenty of historical evidence to prove that Aśoka came to the throne in 269 B.C. or about that. Thus Buddha attained *nirvāṇa* in 218 + 269 = 487 B.C. This is confirmed by a Chinese tradition too. In China in the town of Kaintan (?), attempt was made to record the memory of Buddha's *nirvāṇa* by series of points or cyphers. Every year one cypher was added. This addition continued up to A.D. 489, and their total number was 975 – 489 = 486 B.C. Thus there is perfect agreement between the Chinese and Ceylones traditions. So this very date, namely 487 B.C. deserves to be accepted for the *nirvāṇa* of Buddha.

In the Pāli *Tri-piṭaka* itself is plenty of evidence that Mahāvīra was senior to Buddha both in age and renunciation and that he attained *nirvāṇa* during the life time of Buddha. In the *Sāmañña-phala-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*, in the *Dahara-sutta* of the *Saṁyutta-nikāya* and the *Samiya-sutta* of the *Sutta-nipāta* there are enumerated six Tīrtha-karas who flourished before Buddha. Their names are: Pūraṇa Kāśyapa, Makkhali Gośāla, Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (Mahāvīra), Saṁjaya Belaṭṭhi-putta, Pakuddha Kaccāyana and Ajita Keśa-kambalī.

All of them are said to have been honourd by many, experienced, of long ascetic standing and senior in age; but these adjectives are not used in the case of Buddha. On the other hand, as contrasted with them, Buddha is decribed as younger in age and a novice in renunciation. Thus it stands proved that Mahāvīra was senior to Buddha in age and had taken renunciation earlier than him.

It is mentioned in the *Sāmagāma-sutta* of the *Majjhima-nikāya* that while Buddha was sojourning in Sāmagāma, a Śramaṇic devotee, Cunda by name, came to him and conveyed the message that Nigaṇṭha Nātaputta (Mahāvīra) just passed away in Pāvā and there has arisen a dispute *(kalaha)* among his followers. By this message, Ānanda, the chief disciple of Buddha, had a doubt in his mind whether such a dispute would not arise in their *Saṅgha* after Buddha. He discussed this matter with Buddha as well. This very episode occurs in the *Pāsādikā-sutta* of the *Dīgha-nikāya*. According to the *Saṁgīti-pariyāya-sutta* of this very *nikāya* the same report was conveyed to Buddha's *Saṅgha*; and *Sāri-putta*, a pupil of Buddha, called the *bhikṣus*, reported the news and warned them that such a situation of dispute should not develop after the *nirvāṇa* of Buddha.

In this context, Buddha congratulated Sāriputta on his proper instructions to the *bhikṣus*. This episode is a clear proof and leaves no doubt that Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa* during the life time of Buddha. Further, there was some dispute among the followers of Mahāvīra , the report of which caused some anxiety in the *Saṅgha* of Buddha and some remedial suggestion was made in that direction. In this way it is proved beyond doubt that Mahāvīra was senior to and attained *nirvāṇa* earlier than Bhuddha; and these facts are consistent with the traditional dates of the *nirvāṇa* of both of them[8]

8. Mahāvīra's Place of Birth

It is stated in the *Mahāpurāṇu* of Puṣpadanta (*saṁdhi* 1, *kaḍavakas* 6-7) that Mahāvīra , the 24th Jinendra, would be born to king Siddhārtha and queen Priyakāriṇī of Kuṇḍapura in the Bharata-kṣetra of Jambū-dvīpa. From this it is obvious that Mahāvīra was born in Kuṇḍapura. There are no other indications about the region etc. here beyond that it was

[8]. For references and discussions on the date of the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra and Buddha see Winternitz : *A History of Indian Literature*, II, Appendix II *Nirvāṇa* of Buddha, Appendix VI *Nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra. Muni Nagaraja : *Āgama aura Tripiṭaka : Eka Anuśīlana*, pp. 47-128

located in the Bharata-kṣetra. There are, however, other references which make it clear that this Kuṇḍapura was located in the territory of Videha, for instance, in the *Nirvāṇa-bhakti* of Pūjyapāda:

सिद्धार्थ-नृपति-तनयो भारत-वास्ये विदेह-कुण्डपुरे।

That is, Mahāvīra, the son of king Siddhārtha, was born in Kuṇḍapura, in the territory of Videha, in the Bhārata-varṣa.

Likewise Jinasena states thus in his *Hari-vaṁśa-purāṇa* (*sarga* 2, verses 1-5):

अथ देशोऽस्ति विस्तारी जम्बू-द्वीपस्य भारते,

विदेह इति विख्यातः स्वर्ग-खण्ड-समः श्रिया।

तत्राखण्डल-नेत्राली-पद्मिनी-खण्ड-मण्डनम्,

सुखाम्भः-कुण्डमाभाति नाम्ना कुण्डपुरं पुरम्।

That is, in the Bharata-kṣetra of Jambū-dvīpa, there is the extensive territory well-known as Videha which, in its glory, is like a portion of heaven. There stands prominently a town, Kuṇḍapura by name, which is a pond of the water of happiness and which is decked by a lotus pool in the form of thousand eyes of Indra. It is stated thus in the *Uttara-purāṇa* of Guṇabhadra (*parvan* 74, verses 251-52):

भरतेऽस्मिन् विदेहाख्ये विषये भवनाङ्गणे

राज्ञः कुण्ड-पुरेशस्य वसु-धारा-पतत्-पथः।

That is, a heavy shower of wealth poured down in the veranda or courtyard of the palace of the king of Kunnḍapura in the territory of Videha, in Bharata-kṣetra.

In the *Ācārāṅga* (2, 15) and *Kalpa-sūtra* (110) of the Ardha-Māgadhī canon it is thus stated:

समणे भगवं महावीरे णाए णाय-पुत्ते णाय-कुल-णिव्वत्ते विदेहे विदेह-दिण्णे विदेह-जच्चे विदेह-सूमाले तीसं वासाइं विदेहंसि कट्टु अगार-मज्झे वसित्ता।

Thus Mahāvīra is closely associated with Jñātṛ-kula of the Videha territory where he lived for thirty years prior to his renunciation. It is obvious from these references that lord Mahāvīra was born in Kuṇḍapura which was in the Videha territory. Luckily there is no difference of opinion about the boundaries of Videha.

From ancient times, the territory north of the Ganges was called Videha and the south of it was well known as Magadha. This very territory of Videha is mentioned by the name Tīra-bhukti, and the current form of it, at present, is Tirhut. *Purāṇas* mention the boundary of Tīra-bhukti thus:

गङ्गा-हिमवतोर्मध्ये नदीपञ्चदशान्तरे, तीरभुक्तिरिति ख्यातो देशः परम-पावनः ।

कैशिकीं तु समारभ्य गण्डकीमधिगम्य वै, योजनानि चतुर्विंशद् व्यायामः परिकीर्तितः ।

गङ्गा-प्रवाहमारभ्य यावद् हैमवतं वरम्, विस्तारः षोडशं प्रोक्तो देशस्य कुल-नन्दन ।

Thus the boundaries of Videha or *Tīra-bhukti* (Tirhut) are definite, it was bounded by the Himālayas on the north, by Ganges on the south, by Kaiśikī on the east and by Gaṇḍakī on the west. These boundaries cover quite a wide area, and for us the question is where Kuṇḍapura is to be located there. To answer this question, our attention is attracted by another fact that Mahāvīra is called *Jñātṛ-kulotpanna*, *Jñātṛ-putra* etc. In an ancient Buddhist text, *Mahā-vastu*, there is some indication as to where the clan of Jñātṛ-Kṣatriyas lived. The context is like this. Lord Buddha crosses Ganges, and is proceeding towards the Vaishali (Vaiśālī) Saṅgha; and various Kṣatriya clans like the Licchavis welcome him in great eclat:

स्फीतानि राज्यानि प्रशास्यमाना सम्यग् राज्यानि करोन्ति ज्ञातयः,

तथा इमे लेच्छविमध्ये सन्तो देवेहि शास्ता उपमामकासि ।

Among the Kṣatriya clans, which gave an ovation to Buddha, there was that known as Jñātṛs who ruled their extensive (*sphīta = viśāla*) terriory in such a worthy manner that Buddha himself compared them (who were respectable and splendid) with gods. This reference proves that the Jñātṛ-Kṣatriyas lived in Vaiśālī, and they had quite a respectable position in the Licchavi-gaṇa.

It seems that the prestige of the Jñātṛ family had increased due to their leader Siddhārtha who was at the head of the Vaishali Gaṇa, as its ruler, and who was the son-in-law (or brother-in-law) of king Ceṭaka. Priyakāriṇī (or Triśalā), the daughter (or sister) of Ceṭaka was married to king Siddhārtha, the prominent ruler of the Jñātṛ family.

There is available another strong evidence which links Mahāvīra with Vaiśālī. In more than one place Mahāvīra is called Vesāliya (Vaiśālika) in the Ardha-Māgadhī canon (*Sūtra-kṛtāṅga* 1.2; *Uttar-ādhyayana* 6; etc.). Some of the commentators have explained variously the term Vaiśālika, one of great personality, the son of Viśālā; but that is hardly satisfactory. The obvious interpretation of Vaiśālika is that he was a citizen of Vaiśālī.

The canon refers in many places to the *śrāvakas* of Vaiśālī. The revered Ṛṣabhadeva belonged to the Kośala country or territory, so he is called Arahā Kosaliye, i.e., the Arhat of the Kośala country (*Samavāy-āṅga-sūtra*, 141, 162). It is concluded, therefore, that Mahāvīra was born in Vaiśālī, and Kuṇḍapura was possibly a part of this extensive capital.

The next question is where was this Vaiśālī located. A satisfactory answer to it is available in the *Rāmāyaṇa* of Vālmīki (1,45). Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa accompanied by Vaśiṣṭha-*muni* are proceeding to Mithilā to participate in the Bow Festival arragned by king Janaka. When they reached the bank of the Ganges, Vaśiṣṭha narrated to them the episode of Gaṅg-*āvataraṇa*. Then they crossed the Ganges and reached its northern bank. Thence they saw the town of Viśālā (*Rāmāyaṇa,* 45, 9):

उत्तरं तीरमासाद्य संपूज्यर्षि-गणं तदा, गङ्गा-कूले निविष्टास्ते विशालां ददृशुः पुरीम् ।

and soon they reached it which was beautiful, celestial and like heaven (*Ibid* 1, 45, 10).

ततो मुनिवरस्तूर्णं जगाम सह-राघवः, विशालां नगरीं रम्यां दिव्यां स्वर्गोपमां तदा ।

They halted there for the night and thence, next day, they reached Mithilā, the town of Janaka:

उष्य तत्र निशामेकां जग्मतुर्मिथिलां ततः ।

In Buddhist texts, there are many references to Vaiśālī; and there too it is stated that Buddha crossed the Ganges, proceeded to the north and reached Vaiśālī. At that time Vaiśālī was ruled over by the Licchavi Saṅgha; and to the south of Ganges, Śreṇika, the king of Magadha, and after him king Kuṇika Ajātaśatru had their sovereign kingdom.

There was a basic difference in the governmental set-up of these two kingdoms between which enmity was on the increase.

There is a reference in a Buddhist work (namely, *Dīgha-nikāya-Mahā-pari-nibbāṇa-sutta*) that Varṣakāra, the minister of Ajātaśatru, once asked Buddha whether they can conquer the Licchavi Saṅgha of Vaiśālī. In reply Buddha indicated that nobody can conquer the Saṅgha as long as the people of the Licchavi-*gaṇa* remain organized, unanimously support their republican form of government, uphold justice, and do not violate the code of good behaviour.

Realizing this the minister Varṣakāra took recourse to diplomacy and sowed seeds of dissension among the Licchavis so that they drifted from the path of justice and good behaviour. What happened as a result of this is graphically described in the seventh *śataka* of the *Bhagavatī* of the Ardha-Māgadhī canon.

According to this source the army of Ajātaśatru attacked Vaiśālī; and in this battle weapons like *mahā-śilā-kaṇṭaka* and *ratha-musala* were used. Ultimately the ramparts of Vaiśālī gave way, and Ajātaśatru proved victorious. In fine, Vaiśālī enjoyed great prestige during the time of Mahāvīra; and it was a matter of pride to be a citizen of Vaiśālī. That is why Mahāvīra was mentioned as Vaiśālīya.

Vaiśālī, like many other ancient towns, remained unknown (or unidentified) to historians; but during the last century, archaeological excavations and researches brought to light dilapidated structures, ancient relics, seals and inscriptions on the basis of which the ancient site of Vaiśālī was correctly identified; and it was, without any doubt, the same as Basāḍha, now situated to the north of Ganges, in the Distt. of Muzaffarpur (now Vaishali itself is the district place), in Bihar. It is learnt from local investigations that the village called Vāsu-kuṇḍa, which is close to the present-day Basāḍha, must be the ancient Kuṇḍapura.

There are some signs of an ancient pond or lake there which might have been called Kṣatriya-kuṇḍa. Close to it, there is a piece of land which is looked upon as *a-halya*, i.e., where the plough has never been used; and there is a belief among the local people that some great person was born there in ancient times. For this reason it is looked upon as a holy spot; and a lamp is lit up in *Divālī*, i.e., the day of the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra.

Taking into consideration all these points, scholars have accepted that locality as the birth place of Mahāvīra; and the Government of Bihar, guided by this very evidence took possession of it and had a compound put for it. A marble tablet is erected there on a lotus-shaped pedestal. Eight *gāthās* in Ardha-Māgadhī, along with their translation in Hindi have been inscribed on it. They purport to say that this is the spot where revered Mahāvīra was born and from where he adopted renunciation after spending his *kumāra-kāla* of thirty years. It is also specified in the inscription that this monument was inaugurated by Shri Rajendra Prasada, President of India, in person, in the Vikrama *saṁvat* 2012, when 2555 years had elapsed after the birth of Mahāvīra.

Close to this Mahāvīra Memorial, on a piece of land, adjecent to the ancient Kṣatriya-kuṇḍa, a magnificent building is erected through the donation of Sahu Shanti Prasadji, and there is established the Research Institute of Prakrit, Jainology and Ahiṁsā by the Government of Bihar. This Institute was started in 1956 at Muzaffarpur under the Directorship of Dr. Hiralal Jain. It is through him that the Mahāvīra Memorial was got erected in Vaiśālī and construction of the building was started.

There remians a doubt about our conclusion on the location of Vaiśālī. Some of our coreligionists feel that Vaiśālī was not in Videha but in the Sindhu-deśa. Even in the *Mahāpurāṇu* of Puṣpadanta (5, 5) it is found stated:
सिंधु-वसइ वइसालि-पुरवरि।

and in the *Uttarapurāṇa* (in Sanskrit) of Guṇabhadra (75, 3) we find like this :

सिन्ध्वाख्य-विषये भू-भृद् वैशाली - नगरेऽभवत्,

चेटकाख्योऽति-विख्यातो विनीतः परमार्हतः ।

It is natural that Sindhu-*viṣaya* and Sindhv-*ākhya-viṣaya* in both the texts is understood to refer to the country of Sindha; but it is equally clear that in the present-day Sindha there is neither mentioned a town named Vaiśālī nor can this be reconciled with the historical evidence and events noted above. Scholars have no doubt now about the location of Vaiśālī.

This point was duly considered by me, and I have reached the conclusion that the reading Sindhv-*ākhya-viṣaye* in the *Uttara-purāṇa* is the result of copyist's lapse. Really the reading should be *sindhv-āḍhya-viṣaye*, which means a territory abounding in rivers. This description is perfectly significant for the area of Tirhut. This area is mentioned in the *Śaṅkara-digvijaya*, and there it is called Udaka-deśa.

Even the name Tīra-bhukti has this very significance that the entire area is nearly covered by rivers and their extensive banks. A reference to *Tīra-bhukti* is noted above; and therein this area is described as *nadī-pañcadaś-āntare*, i.e., the area divided between by fifteen rivers. Even today one hears about many of these rivers and their floods plunging under waters the entire area now and then. Thus from the above two references what is intended is not any other Sindhu-desa but only the territory of Tīra-bhukti or Udaka-deśa which is full of rivers.

In this connection, there remains still another question to be considered. Since long, Kuṇḍalapura, near Nalanda (Distt. Patna) in Bihar, is looked upon as the birth-place of Mahāvīra. There is a big temple; and it is considered to be a *tīrtha*, a sacred place of pilgrimage, being the birth-place of Mahāvīra. With this belief thousands of pilgrims visit this place every year. Likewise Śvetāmbaras consider Kṣatriya-kuṇḍa, near Lacchū-vāḍa (Distt. Monghyr) as the birth-place of Mahāvīra.

But both these places are not located in Videha, to the north of Ganges: they are in Magadha, to the south of the Ganges; and thus they contradict the clear references found in the early texts of both the sects. As a matter of fact, Jacobi and other foreign scholars expressed doubt about these places; and they considered the evidence impartially and strictly from the historical point of view. It is their researches that have identified Vaiśālī Kuṇḍa-pura.

The antiquity of these two places, which are looked upon at present to be the birth-places of Mahāvira does not go far back in time. It appears that there were Jainas in large numbers in the territories of Videha and Magadha for about twelve hundred years after Mahāvīra.

The Chinese traveller Hiuen Tsiang came to India in the 7th century during the reign of Harṣa-vardhana, and he tried to visit all the Buddhist holy places. He visited Vaiśālī too; and he observes, in his travel reports, quite clearly that there were more *nirgranthas*, i.e., Jainas, than Buddhists in Vaiśālī.

But thereafter it seems that the conditions changed to a great extent; and for various reasons the number of Jainas went on decreasing. Then after some centuries the Jainas came to and settled down in this part perhaps during the Mugal period for trade and commerce; and not so much on the archaeological and historical evidence, but just from similarity of names and misled by inauthentic local hearsay, they mistook Kuṇḍalapura and Lacchū-vāḍa as the birth-place of Mahāvīra.

Both the localities have become and will continue to be places of pilgrimage on account of the temples built there, images solemnly set up, pious faith of the people and regularity of the pilgrimage.

But now we have realized that the real birth-place of Mahāvīra is Vaiśāli and Kuṇḍala-pura; it is accepted on all hands by Indian and European scholars; even the Government of Bihar have given recognition to them by erecting memorial for Mahāvīra and also by establishing a Research Institute there. Under these circumstances, the Jainas as a community

should not ignore these places, but by extending full cooperation invest them with full propriety in view of their historical importance.[9]

9. Place of Penance of Mahāvīra

Where Mahāvīra started practising penance is stated thus in the *Mahāpurāṇu* (1, 11) of Puṣpadanta:

चंदप्पह-सिवियहिँ पहु चडिण्णु, तहिँ णाहु संड-वणि णवर दिण्णु।
मग्गसिर-कसण-दसमी-दिणंति, संजायइ तियसुच्छवि महंति।
वोलीणइ चरियावरण-पंकि, हत्थुत्तर-मज्झासिइ ससंकि।
छट्ठोपवासु किउ मलहरेण, तवचरणु लइउ परमेसरेण।

Likewise, the *Uttara-purāṇa* (74, 302, 304) describes his taking to penance thus:

नाथः (नाथ-)षण्ड-वनं प्राप्य स्व-यानादवरुह्य सः, श्रेष्ठः षष्ठोपवासेन स्वप्रभा- पटलावृते।
निविश्योदङ्मुखो वीरो रुन्द्र-रत्न-शिला-तले,
दशम्यां मार्गशीर्षस्य कृष्णायां शशिनि श्रिते।
हस्तोत्तरर्क्षयोर्मध्यं भागं चापास्त-लक्ष्मणि, दिवसावसितौ धीरः संयमाभिमुखोऽभवत्।

Then the *Harivaṁśa-purāṇa* (2, 50-52) says:

सौधर्माद्यैः सुरैरेत्य कृताभिषव-पूजनः, आरुह्य शिविकां दिव्यामुह्यमानां सुरेश्वरैः।
उत्तरा-फाल्गुनीष्वेव वर्तमाने निशाकरे, कृष्णस्य मार्गशीर्षस्य दशम्यामगमद् वनम्।
अपनीय तनोः सर्वं वस्त्रमाल्य-विभूषणम्, पञ्चमुष्टिभिरुद्धृत्य मूर्धजानभवन्मुनिः।

These three sources clearly state that Lord Mahāvīra of the Nātha, Nāya, or Jñātṛ family went to the Ṣaṇḍa (Khaṇḍa)-*vana*, started penance and became a *muni*, on the 10th day of the dark half of the month of *Mārga-śīrṣa*. According to the texts of the Ardha-māgadhī canon such as *Kalpa-sūtra* etc., it has been mentioned as *Nāya-saṁḍa-vana*, i.e., the park belonging to the Jñātṛ-kṣatriyas.

One thinks that even in the *Uttara-purāṇa* the original reading must have been *Nātha-ṣaṁda-vana* or *Nāha-saṇḍa-vaṇa* in Apabhramsa on which the ignorant copyists have improved

[9] Hoernle, *Upāsaka-daśā*, Introduction and Notes. *Cambridge History of India*, I, p. 140. *Bhāratīya Saṁskṛtī men Jaina Dharma kā Yogadāna*, pp. 22 ff.

in their own way. Thus the place where Mahāvīra practised penance is proved to be the park close to Vaiśāli and Kuṇḍalapura where the Kṣatriyas of Jñātṛ family resided.

10. Place of Mahāvīra's Omniscience

The locality where Mahāvīra attained *kevala-jñāna* is thus described in the *Mahāpurāṇu* of Puṣpadanta (2, 5-6):

वारह-संवच्छर-तव-चरणु, किउ सम्मइणा दुक्किय-हरणु;
पोसंतु अहिंस खंति ससहि; भयवंतु संतु विहरंतु महि,
गउ जिम्हिय-गामहु अइ-णियडि, सुविउलि रिजुकुला-णइहि तडि।
(घत्ता) मोर-कीर-सारस-सरि उज्जाणम्मि मणोहरि,
सालामूलि रिसिराणउ रयण-सिलहि आसीणउ।
छट्ठेणुववासें हय-दुरिएँ, परिपालिय-तेरह-विह-चरिएँ;
वइसाह-मासि सिय-दसमि दिणि, अवरण्हइ जायइ हिम-किरणि;
हत्थुत्तर-मज्झ-समासियइ, पहु वडिवण्णउ केवलसियइ।

The same is narrated in the *Uttara-purāṇa* (74, 348 ff.) :

भगवान् वर्धमानोऽपि नीत्वा द्वादश-वत्सरान्, छाद्मस्थ्येन जगद्बन्धुर्जृम्भिकग्रामसंनिधौ।
ऋजुकूला-नदी-तीरे मनोहर-वनान्तरे, महारत्नशिला-पट्टे प्रतिमा-योगमावसन्।
स्थित्वा षष्ठोपवासेन सोऽधस्तात्सालभूरुहः, वैशाखे मासि सज्योत्स्नदशम्यामपराह्णके।
हस्तोत्तरान्तरं याते शशिन्यारूढशुद्धिकः, क्षपक-श्रेणिमारुह्य शुक्ल-ध्यानेन सुस्थितः।
घाति-कर्माणि निर्मूल्य प्राप्यानन्त-चतुष्टयम्, परमात्म-पदं प्रापत्परमेष्ठी स सन्मतिः॥

This event is thus described in the *Hari-vaṁśa-purāṇa* (2, 56-59) :

मनःपर्यय-पर्यन्त-चतुर्ज्ञान-महेक्षणः, तपो द्वादश-वर्षाणि चकार द्वादशात्मकम्।
विहरन्नथ नाथोऽसौ गुण-ग्राम-परिग्रहः, ऋजुकूलापगा-कूले जृम्भिक-ग्राममीयिवान्।
तत्रातापन-योगस्थः सालाभ्याश-शिला-तले, वैशाख-शुक्ल-पक्षस्य दशम्यां षष्ठमाश्रितः।
उत्तरा-फाल्गुनी-प्राप्ते शुक्ल-ध्यानी निशाकरे, निहत्य घाति-संघातं केवल-ज्ञानमाप्तवान्।

Mahāvīra practised penance for twelve years. He encouragd his sister Candanā in the practice of *ahiṁsā* and forbearance, and reached, in his pious tour, the park on the bank of the river Ṛju-kūlā, near the village Jṛmbhika. He plunged himself in meditation, seated on a slab of stone under a sāla tree; and observing a fast for two days, he obtained omniscience

in the afternoon of the 10th day of bright half of Vaiśākha, when the moon was between Uttar-āṣāḍha and Hasta. These details are confirmed by the *Uttara-purāṇa* (74,3,49) and *Hari-vaṁśa-purāṇa* (2, 56-59).

Thus Mahāvīra attained omniscience on the bank of Ṛju-kūlā in the vicinity of Jṛmbhika-grāma. According to the *Ācārāṅga* and *Kalpa-sūtra* the name of the village is Jaṁbhiya and that of the river Ṛju-vālukā.

Though this village and the river are of conclusively indentified, there seems to be no doubt that this river is the same which, in Bihar, is known as Kuyela or Kuyela-kūlā, and on the bank of it there is a big Railway station of that very name. Close by there is a town Jambui by name.

So this very place should be accepted to be the locality where Mahāvīra attained omniscience; and suitable memorial should be erected there.

11. Place of Mahāvīra's First Sermon

After attaining *kevala-jñāna*, Mahāvīra reached Rājagṛha; and his *samavasaraṇa* was organized on the mount Vipul-ācala nearby. There his *divya-dhvani*, or Voice Divine, flowed out; and that was on the first day of the black half of the month of Śrāvaṇa.

According to the *Mahā-puraṇu* of Puṣpadanta Mahāvīra gave his first sermon when 66 days had passed after his attainment of *kevala-jñāna*. This event is described in details in the *Hari-vaṁśa-purāṇa* (2, 61, etc.):

षट्षष्टि-दिवसान् भूयो मौनेन विहरन् विभुः, आजगाम जगत्ख्यातं जिनो राजगृहं पुरम्।
आरुरोह गिरिं तत्र विपुलं विपुल-श्रियम्, प्रबोधार्थं स लोकानां भानुमानुदयं यथा।
श्रावणस्यासिते पक्षे नक्षत्रेऽभिजिति प्रभुः, प्रतिपद्यह्नि पूर्वाह्णे शासनार्थमुदाहरत्।

Thus the mount Vipul-ācala, near Rājagṛha (in Bihar) is the important and sacred place where the divine sermon of lord Mahāvīra was first delivered.

Even from early times there are some Jaina temples on Vipul-ācala; and some 25-30 years back a *Vīra-śāsana* Memorial

was erected there. Since then the *Vīra-sāsana* Jayantī is being celebrated on this 1st day of the black half of Srāvaṇa, Still the Memorial and the Sacred Day have not won universal prestige (and importance) commensurate with their historical significance. Some efforts must be made in this direction.

This is the spot where not only the first religious sermon of lord Mahāvīra was given out, but it is here that famous Indra-bhūti Gautama, well-versed in Vedas, came to Mahāvīra and also accepted his leadership and became the first Gaṇadhara.

It is here that Gautama presented Lord's divine Message, classifying it into *Aṅgas* and *Pūrvas* and giving them the shape of texts (*granth-ārūḍha)*. It is here that Śreṇika Bimbasāra, the king of Magadha, received the instructions of Mahāvīra; and having discussed religious topics with Gautama Gaṇadhara, he laid the foundation of Jaina *purāṇas* and tales.

It is here that Śreṇika incurred that meritorious *karmic* bondage whereby in his subsequent birth as a man he was destined to be the future Tīrthakara, Mahā-padma by name.

12. Place of Mahāvīra's Nirvāṇa

Having attained omniscience (*kevala-jñāna*) on the bank of Ṛju-kūlā and after preaching the principle of Jainism through his divine voice (*divya-dhvani*), lord Mahāvīra toured over different areas of the country and propounded the religous doctrines. Afterwards he reached Pāvāpura and seated himself on a clean or pure slab of stone in a park studded with many ponds.

He did not move out for two days; and plunged in pure meditation (*śukla-dhyāna*) he quitted the mortal coil and became a *Siddha* in the last quarter of the night of the 14th day of the black half of the month of Kārtika. This is graphically described in the *Mahā-puraṇu* of Puṣpadanta (3, 1-2):

अंतित्थ-णाहु वि महि विहरिवि, जण-दुरियाइँ दुलंघइँ पहरिवि;
पावापुर-वरु पत्तउ मणहरि; णव-तरु-पल्लवि वणि बहु-सर-वरि।

संठिउ पविमल-रयण-सिला-यलि, राय-हंसु णावइ पंकय-दलि;
दोण्णि दियहँ पविहारु मुएप्पिणु, सुक्क-झाणु तिज्जउ झाएप्पिणु।
(घत्ता) णिव्वत्तिइ कत्तिइ तम-कसणि पक्ख-चउद्दसि वासरि,
थिइ ससहरि दुहँहरि साइवइ पच्छिम-रयणिहि अवसरि।
कय-ति-जोय-सुणिरोहु अणिट्ठउ, किरिया-छिण्णइ झाणि परिट्ठिउ,
णिहयाघाइ-चउक्कु अदेहउ, वसु-सम-गुण-सरीरु णिण्णेहउ।
रिसि-सहसेण समउ रय-छिंदणु, सिद्धउ जिणु सिद्धत्थहु णंदणु।

The *Uttara-purāṇa* too describes this episode (76, 508-12):

इहान्त्य-तीर्थ-नाथोऽपि विहृत्य विषयान् बहून्।
क्रमात् पावापुरं प्राप्य मनोहर-वनान्तरे, बहूनां सरसां मध्ये महामणि-शिलातले।
स्थित्वा दिन-द्वयं वीत-विहारो वृद्ध-निर्जरः, कृष्णकार्तिक-पक्षस्य चतुर्दश्यां निशात्यये।
स्वाति-योगे तृतीयेद्ध-शुक्लध्यान-परायणः, कृत-त्रियोग-संरोधः समुच्छिन्न-क्रियं श्रितः।
हताघाति-चतुष्कः सन्नशरीरो गुणात्मकः, गन्ता मुनि-सहस्रेण निर्वाणं सर्व-वाञ्छितम्।

For these references it is clear that Lord Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa* in a park, near Pāvāpura, round about which there were many ponds or lakes.

At present the site of the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra is accepted near Bihar-Sherif in Paṭna district where a magnificent Jaina temple stands in the centre of a big lake. This is accepted as the *tīrtha-ksetra* on all hands. Both the sects, Digambara and Śvetāmbara, have voluntarily accepted this place as the spot of the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra.

But historians have many difficulties in accepting this place as the *nirvāṇa-bhūmi* of Mahāvīra. According to the *Kalpa-sūtra* and *Pariśiṣṭa-parvan*, Pāvā, where Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa*, was the capital of a Kṣatriya clan, Malla by name. These Mallas belonged to or were a part of the Vajji or Licchavi *Saṅgha* of Vaiśālī; and they were opposed or enemical to the autocratic government in Magadha.

Thus there is no likelihood of any of these kingdoms south of the Ganges where the holy place of the present-day Pāvāpurī is located. Besides this, on authority of Buddhist texts like the *Dīgha-* and *Majjhima-nikāya* it is proved that Pāvā was located in Śākya country; and it was to the west

of Vaiśālī and at a distance of ten to twelve miles from Kuśīnagara.

When lord Buddha was residing in Sāma-gāma in the Śākya territory, the message was coveyed to him, just within one day, that lord Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa* at Pāvā. On this point there are available many references in Buddhist texts, and they have been duly noted above.

Taking all these facts into account, historians have arrived at the conclusion that Pāvāpura, where lord Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa*, is really that village, Pāvā by name, near Kuśī-nagara in Devaria Distt. of U.P., which, at present, is known by the name Saṭhiyāva Fajilnagar where are available plenty of ancient relics and ruins. So from the historical point of view this place should be accepted as the place of the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra and be given the status of a worthy *tīrtha-kṣetra*[10].

13. Historical Contemporaries of Mahāvīra

(a) Ceṭaka : Ruler of Vaiśālī

Details about king Ceṭaka of Vaiśālī are found in the *Mahāpurāṇu* of Puṣpadanta, canto 5, as well in the *Uttara-purāṇa, parvan* 75. It is said about him that he was very famous, polite and a Param-ārhata, i.e., a great follower of Jainism. His queen was Subhadrā-devī by name. He had ten sons: Dhana-datta, Dhana-bhadra, Upendra, Sudatta, Siṁha-bhadra, Kumbhoja, Akampana, Pataṅgata, Prabhañjana and Prabhāsa. Besides, he had seven daughters as well.

The eldest was Priyakāriṇī who was married to king Siddhārtha of Kuṇḍapura, and they had the rare fortune of becoming the parents of Lord Mahāvīra. The second daughter was Mṛgāvatī who was married to king Śatānīka of

[10] For detailed discussions on the place of *nirvāṇa*, see Kanhaiyalal, *Pāvā-samīkṣā* (Aśoka Prakāśana, Katara Bazar, Chhapra, Bihar, 1972). *History and Culture of the Indian Peoples*, Vol. II, *The Age of Imperial Unity*, p. 7, 'Malla'.

Candravaṁśa, ruling at Kauśāmbī, the capital of Vatsa-deśa. The third daughter, Suprabhā, was given in marriage to Daśaratha, king of Hema-kakṣa, the capital of Daśārṇa (Distt. Vidiśā, M.P.). The fourth daughter, Prabhāvatī, became the queen of Udayana, who ruled at Rorukā, the capital of Kaccha. She became famous as Śīlavatī on account of her outstanding character (*śīla-vrata)*.

Jyeṣthā was the fifth daughter of king Ceṭaka; and Sātyaki, king of Mahīpura, the capital of Gandharva-deśa asked for her hand in wedding. But king Ceṭaka did not approve of this marital relation for some reason or the other. Sātyaki felt offended; and, getting enraged, he attacked the kingdom of Ceṭaka; but being defeated in the battle, he felt ashamed and accepted renunciation (*muni-dīkṣā*) at the hands of the saint Dāma-vara.

Śreṇika, the king of Magadha, was highly enamoured of Jyeṣṭhā and Celanā (the sixth daughter of Ceṭaka) on seeing their portraits. He requested king Ceṭaka for their hands in marrige. As Śreṇika was much advanced in age at that time, king Ceṭaka did not accept his proposal. Thereby king Śreṇika was awefully pained. His minister discussed this matter with Abhaya-kumāra, the heir apperent.

Abhaya-kumāra put on the dress of a merchant and got himself admitted into the palace of Vaiśālī and showed the portrait of Śreṇika to both the princesses and got them interested in and enamoured of Śreṇika. He tried to lead them both through an underground passage. Celanā sent Jyeṣṭhā back to her apartment with the pretence of fetching her ornaments but herself followed Abhaya-kumāra to Rāja-gṛha; and she was married to king Śreṇika. When Jyeṣthā realized that her sister treacherously left her behind, she became very much detached (to the world) and turned herself into a Jaina nun under an *āryikā*.

The seventh daughter of Ceṭaka was Candanā by name. While she was sporting with her companions in a park, a Vidyādhara, Manovega by name, saw her and fell in love

with her, being captivated by her beauty. Secretly he kindnapped her. But being afraid that his wife Manovegā might get angry with him, he left Candanā in a park, Bhūtaramaṇa, on the right bank of the river Irāvatī. There Candanā met a Bhilla, Śyāmāṅka by name. He presented her respectfully to his king Siṁha by name. The Bhilla chief entrusted her to Mitra-vara who was in the service of Ṛṣabhasena, a rich merchant of Kauśāmbī, to whom finally she was led. But Bhadrā, the wife of the merchant became jealous of her and kept her as a slave girl in her service.

One day when Mahāvīra came to Kauśāmbī, Candanā offered food to him with great devotion. Thereby Candanā became well known in Kauśāmbī; and the report about this reached the ears of her elder sister Mṛgāvatī. Mṛgāvatī, accompanied by prince Udayana, came to the house of the *Śreṣṭhin*, i.e., banker-cum-merchant and took Candanā with her to the palace. By this time Candanā had developed a temper of detachment from worldly ties. She sought shelter with Mahāvīra and accepted *dīkṣā* or renunciation under him. In due course, Candanā became the leader of the Saṅgha of nuns (*āryikā*) under Mahāvīra.

Such are the details about the family connections and prosperity of king Ceṭaka of Vaiśālī available in the Jaina *purāṇas*. His relations with the contemporary ruling families are obvious. King Ceṭaka's daughter Priyakāriṇī was the mother of Mahāvīra; and his daughters Celanā and Mṛgāvatī were married respectively to Śreṇika, king of Magadha, and Śatānīka, king of Kauśāmbī.

(b) Śreṇika Bimbisāra : King of Magadha

Sreṇika, king of Magadha, had long-standing and thick relations with lord Mahāvīṛa . Much of the traditional account in Jaina *purāṇas* begins with the questions of Śreṇika and the answers of Mahāvīra or of his chief *gaṇadhara* (i.e., leader of the congregation). Major details of it can be found in the *Mahāvīra-purāṇu* of Puṣpadanta, *saṁdhis* 6-11. There is no doubt about the historicity of this king.

Besides the Jaina texts, he is mentioned and details about him are available in Buddhist works and in the *purāṇas* of Vedic tradition. According to the Digambara Jaina tradition, he is mentiond by his name Śreṇika only; but (we are also told that) he had a liking for playing on the *bhimbhā* or *bherī*, a musical instrument (see *Mahāpurāṇu*, 7, 2); and on this account, it seems that he became famous also by the name Bhimbasāra or Bhambhasāra. In Śvetāmbara works, he is mentioned mostly by this name. This very word seems to have been changed or corrupted as Bimbisāra or Bimbasāra.

In the Buddhist tradition, this name is mentioned by itself or along with the other name Śreṇika. According to the *Udāna Aṭṭh-kathā* (104), *bimbi* is a synonym for gold; and because the complexion of the body of this king was like gold, he came to be called Bimbisāra. There is a Tibetan tradition, according to which the name of his mother was Bimbi, and hence he came to be called Bimbisāra. It seems, however, that these etymologies have been suggested only from his name. Even the name Śreṇika is differently explained. According to the *Abhidhāna-cintāmaṇi* of Hemacandra (श्रेणीः कारयति श्रेणिको मगधेश्वरः) Śreṇika, king of Magadha, was so called because he established so many guilds.

In one of the recensions of the Buddhist text, *Vinaya-piṭaka*, it has been stated that Bimbisāra was put in charge of eighteen guilds, i.e., he was made the head of them; that is why he came to be known by the name Śreṇika. In the *Jambuddīva-paṇṇattī* of the Ardha-māgadhī canon, 18 *śreṇis* are mentioned: 9 *nāruas* and 9 *kāruas*. Nine *nāruas* are: *kumbhāra* (potter); *paṭavā* or *paṭṭilla* (either weaver or paṭel); *suvaṇṇakāra* (goldsmith), *sūvakāra* or *sūtakāra* (cook or carpenter); *gandharva* (singer or perfumer); *kāsavaga* (barber); *mālākāra* (florist or garland-maker); *kacchakāra* (vegetable seller); and *tambolia* (dealer in betel leaf). The nine *kāruas* are: *carmakāra* (leather worker); *yantrapīḍaka* (oilpresser); *gaṁchiya* (clothseller?); *chimpī* (artisan); *kaṁsāra* (metal worker); *sīvaga* or *sevaka*, (a tailor or, attendant); *guāra* or *gvāla* (cow-keeper); *bhilla* (forester); and *dhīvara* (fisherman).

Some of the above terms are differently spelt. The Prakrit texts mention his name as Seṇiya which might stand for *sainika* or *senāpati* and its wrong Sanskrit back-formation might have been Śreṇika.[11] As stated in this work, Cilātaputra or Kirātaputra was born to queen Cilāta- or Kirāta-devi from Praśreṇika or Upaśreṇika, king of Rājagṛha, in Magadha. He arrested, through treachery, Pradyota, king of Ujjain and presented him before his father. Earlier the king had sent Audāyana against Uddyota, but the latter defeated him and made him a prisoner. The success of Cilātaputra, therefore, pleased his father who announced him as his successor and coronated him as heir apparent.

But Cilātaputra was not successful as a ruler and his behaviour was unethical. The ministers and feudatories invited prince Śreṇika who was an exile in Kāñcīpura. Śreṇika came and defeated Kirātaputra and banished him from the kingdom.

Cilātaputra got himself established as the leader of rogues and robbers in the forest, but was defeated a second time by Śreṇika. Finally Cilātaputra renounced the world and became a monk; and in that status he became a victim of a female jackal and was born in heaven. Śreṇika was the son of Upaśreṇika from his second queen Suprabhā-devī. He was endowed with extraordinary intelligence; and, when king Upaśreṇika tested the princes about their ability to govern the kingdom, it is Śreṇika who proved successful.

Lest there might develop mutual enmity among the princes, Śreṇika was banished from the kingdom. First Śreṇika reached Nandagrāma, and thereafter he travelled exhibiting his skill and heroism and reached Kāñcipura. Oppressed by the tyranny of Cilātaputra, the ministers invited Śreṇika and installed him as the king of Magadha.

One day king Śreṇika went out hunting in the forest close to the capital. He saw there a monk engrossed in meditation;

[11] Muni Nagaraj, *Āgama aura Tripiṭaka*, p.324.

he took him to be a bad omen; and getting angry, he left on the monk his hunting dogs. Through the influence of the monk, even the dogs became quiet; and the arrows hit by the king turned into flowers.

Then the king, to satisfy his vengeance, put a dead serpent round the neck of the monk. As a consequence of this dire sin, he became destined for being born in the seventh hell. But he could observe that the great monk, even though harassed so much by him, was not in the least affected or disturbed either. When the monk saw that now the king had the mental peace, he blessed him in sweet words and gave him religious instructions. Well, that is how Śreṇika got rid of his *mithyātva* and developed *kṣāyika-samyaktva*. He bowed down at the feet of the saint and returned home in a happy mood.

One day king Śreṇika received the report that lord Mahāvīra has arrived on the mount Vipulācala. He proceeded there with devotion, bowed down to him, and offered prayers. As a result of this religious bent of mind, his *samyaktva* was strengthened; his life in the seventh hell was commuted into that of the first hell; and he incurred the bondage of the *tīrthakara-nāma-karman*. On this occasion, king Śreṇika inquired of Gautama Gaṇadhara as to why he (i.e., himself) is not inclined to accept the vows (*vrata*), even though he has great faith in Jainism.

The Gaṇadhara pointed out to him, in reply, that he had excessive addiction to pleasures and is under the operation of deep *mithyātva*; and further his conduct has been bad because he has committed preliminary sins (*ārambha*). The consequent acute sins, the Gaṇadhara continued, have led him to the bondage of life in hell. The bondage of any other grade of existence (*gati*) than that of heaven will not allow the soul to accept and practise the vows; but such a soul can, however, possess *samyag-darśana* or right faith.

This is the reason, Gautama explained to Śreṇika, why the latter was possessed of *samyaktva*, but not in a position to

practise the vows (*Uttara-purāṇa* 74, 433-36):

सर्वं निधाय तच्चित्ते श्रद्धाभूनमहती मते, जैने कुतस्तथापि स्यान्-न मे व्रत-परिग्रहः।
इत्यनु श्रेणिक-प्रश्नादवादीद् गण-नायकः, भोग-संजननाद् गाढ-मिथ्यात्वानुभवोदयात्।
दुश्चरित्रान्महारम्भात्संचितृयैनो निकाचितम्, नारकं बद्धवानायुस्त्वं प्रागेवात्र जन्मनि।
बद्ध-देवायुषोऽन्यायुरनाङ्गी स्वीकुरुते व्रतम्, श्रद्धानं तु समाधत्ते तस्मात् त्वं नाग्रहीर्व्रतम्।

Śreṇika was also informed that he would pass away, after the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra when just three years, eight months and fifteen days of the *caturtha ārā* are remaining (after which the *pañcama-kāla* would begin). Śreṇika had such a firm faith in religion (*samyaktva*) that he recieved praise even from *Surendra* (i.e., the chief of gods). But a certain god would not believe this, and he came to test Śreṇika.

As king Śreṇika was passing by the road, the god put on the appearance of a monk and started catching fish with a net in his hands. The king approached and saluted him; he submitted to him that he would act as his servant (and catch the fish for him); and he questioned him why he was occupied in this sinful activity. If fish were needed by him, he would collect them for him. The god said 'No, no, I do not need any more fish.' This episode became the talk of the town, and people began to find fault with Jaina religion.

The king presented an example or situation (by way of illustration). In his assembly, the king bestowed on the princes a royal grant of maintenance, stamped with the royal signet but all besmeared with dirt. All of them accepted the document with great satisfaction and received it on their head. The king asked them how they could take it on their head when it was all covered with dirt. From them the reply came : 'Just as a sentient *jīva*, though wrapped in filthy body, deserves respect, so too the great document from the king, though besmeared with dirt, deserves respect. The king smiled and pointed out to them that likewise the saints characterised by religious emblem (*dharma-mudrā*) deserve to be duly respected. Even if they have any flaw in them, they should not be detested, but they sould be made free from it with all due modesty.

Having personally observed the firm religious faith of the king, that god was very much pleased; and he returned to heaven after resenting the king with a precious necklace. This episode illustrates that since the time Śreṇika accepted the Jaina way of life, his religious faith went on increasing and he never wavered in it.

(c) Śreṇika's Son : Prince Abhayakumāra

During the reign of Cilātaputra, when Śreṇika was still a prince and living in exile at Kāñcīpura, he got himself wedded to a high-born girl, Abhayamati by name. From her he had a son, Abhayakumāra, who was endowed with exceptional intelligence. It is he who brought about the marital union of his father, as desired by him, with Celanādevī. Along with Śreṇika he too attended the *samavasaraṇa* of lord Mahāvīra. Abhayakumāra had not only firm faith in religion but he was also wel-versed in its doctrines. Even king Śreṇika got himself enlightened on certain religious topics from him. At last Abhayakumāra too accepted renunciation and reached *mokṣa* or liberation (*Uttara-purāṇa* 74, 526-27).

(d) Śreṇika's Son : Prince Vāriṣeṇa

As noted above, king Śreṇika married Celanādevī in his advanced age, and that too through the efforts of his eldest son Abhayakumāra. Celanā gave birth to a son, Vāriṣeṇa by name. Even during his boyhood he developed a religious bent of mind; and as required by the rules of conduct for the best layman (*uttam-śrāvaka*) he used to practise *pratimā-yoga* in a cemetery.

Once a certain robber, Vidyuc-cara, who was gifted with the use of miraculous eye-paint (*añjana-siddha*), stole the necklace of Celanā from the palace for the satisfaction of his love-lady, Gaṇikā-sundarī, but he could not reach it to his beloved. Palace guards pursued him seeing on him the flash of the necklace, Candra-hāsa. The robber realized this; and he

dropped the necklace at the feet of Vāriṣeṇa, who was plungd in meditation in a cemetary, and ran away. The royal guards reported this to the king. The king took Vāriṣeṇa to be the theif and, in a fit of anger, ordered him to be beheaded. But due to the spiritual aura (*dharma-prabhāva*) of Vāriṣeṇa, the weapons of royal guards proved ineffective.

Seeing his divine powers, the king stopped the guards and tried to bring him to the palace; but he did not come and became a monk observing *mahā-vratas*. On his begging tour, he went to a village Palāśa-kheḍa; there he instructed his erstwhile friend and made him enter the ascetic order. But the friend had still temptation or attachment for his own wife. Vāriṣeṇa took him, however, to the apartment of his mother Celanā, and by his exemplary detachment confirmed his friend in the practice of ascetic virtues.

(e) Śreṇika's Son : Gaja-kumāra

King Śreṇika had a queen Dhana-śrī by name. While she was carrying pregnancy, she had, during the fifth month, a longing that she should sport in a park, going there seated with her husband on the back of an elephant and along with her retinue in great pomp, when the sky is cloudy and drizzling lightly. Though it was not the rainy season at that time, Abhayakumāra managed all this with the aid of his Vidyādhara friend and fulfilled the pregnancy longing of his step-mother.

In due course, Dhana-śrī gave birth to a son, Gaja-kumāra. As a youth, he went to lord Mahāvīra, heard his religious sermons, and accepted renunciation. Sometime Gaja-kumāra went to the Kaliṅga country, and started practising *ātāpana-yoga* meditation seated on a slab of stone, to the west of the capital town, Danti-pura. The ruling king there had no idea of such a meditation; so he asked his minister why this monk was exposing himself to heat like this. His minister Buddha-dāsa was inimical to Jainism. He told the king that the monk was suffering from the disease of *vāta-roga*, and

consequently to bring warmth in his body he was doing like this. The king full of sympathy for the monk enquired how his ailment could be removed.

The minister suggested the remedy, namely, when this poor man comes to the town for alms, the slab of stone on which he sits might be fully heated so that the hot stone might remove this *prabhañjana-vāyu* when he sits on it. The king ordered accordingly, and his order was duly carried out. The result was, when the saint Gaja-kumāra returned from the town after seeking his alms and sat on that stone, he suffered terrible burning. He patiently bore this suffering and attained liberation. Later the god arrived there; and the minister, the king and thousands of other persons accepted the Jaina way of life.

(f) Śatānika, king of Kauśāmbī, and Udayana and Caṇḍa-pradyota of Ujjainī

It has been already noted in the biography of Candanā that Mṛgāvatī, one of the seven daughters of Ceṭaka, king of Vaiśālī, was married to Śatānika of the Somavaṁśa, ruling at Kauśāmbī. This Kauśāmbī is identical with the present-day Kosam, a village, at a distance of 35 miles to the south-west of Allahabad. When Mahāvīra reached Kauśāmbī and Candanā offered food to him, Mṛgāvatī came there and felicitated her younger sister on her piety. It is the same Udayana, the son of Śatānīka, that was married to Vāsava-dattā, the daughter of Caṇḍa-pradyota, the king of Ujjainī.

According to the Buddhist literary tradition, Udayana and Buddha were born on one and the same day. And there is also a well confirmed Jaina tradition that the very night when Pālaka, after the demise of Pradyota, was coronated, Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa*. These references prove that both these great persons, namely, Buddha and Mahāvīra were contemporaries and shed useful light on the then political conditions.

14. Literature on Mahāvīra's Biography

(a) Biographies in Prakrit

Lord Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa* in 527 B.C., and since then attempts were made to collect details about his biography. As stated by Vīrasena, the author of *Dhavalā*, Indrabhūti Gautama, the chief disciple of Mahāvīra , was a Brāhmaṇa of high character and possessed of the knowledge of four Vedas and six *aṅgas*. It is but natural that such a learned disciple should attempt a systematic compilation of the biography and teachings of his master.

All such material is collected in twelve *aṅgas* which are also known by the name *dvādaśa Gaṇi-piṭaka*. The twelfth *aṅga*, Dṛṣṭi-vāda, contained a section *Pratham-ānuyoga*, which covered *purāṇic* details of the genealogies of all the Tīrthakaras, Cakravartins and other great men, as well as the history of the Nātha or Jñātṛ family and of Tīrthakara Mahāvīra.

It is a misfortune that the literary material so put together by Indra-bhūti Gautama is no more available. But its details in short, are found scattered in the entire Ardha-Māgadhī canon available today. In the fourth *aṅga*, *Samavāy-āṅga*, are intorduced some details about Tīrthakaras, their parents, birth places, locality of renunciation, pupils, the donors of food etc. In the *Ācārāṅga*, which is the first *śrut-āṅga*, there is available quite a vivid description of the penance of Mahāvīra. In the fifth *aṅga*, *Vyākhyā-prajñapti*, there are thousands of questions and answers between Mahāvīra and Gautama, and there are available many glimpses of their lives and contemporary events. At that time, there ware many *Pārśv-āpatyas*, i.e., the followers of *Pārśva-nātha*; and Maṅkhali Gośāla, who started the Ājīvika sect, also lived at the same time. During that period there ensued a great battle between the kingdoms of Magadha and Vaiśālī; and heavy missiles and mechanical weapons called *mahā-śilā-kaṇṭaka*, *ratha-musala* etc. were employed in the fight. In the seventh *aṅga*, *Upāsak-ādhyayana* places connected with the life of Mahāvīra such

as, Vaiśālī, Jñātṛ-ṣaṇḍa-vana, Kollāga-sanniveśa, Karmāra-grāma, Vāṇiya-gāma are mentioned; and they are helfpul in identifying some of the localities. The *Anuttar-aupapātika*, the ninth *aṅga*, mentions, how the queens (of king Śreṇika who was a contemporary of Mahāvīra) like Celanā, Dhāriṇī and Nandā, and also twentythree princes entered the ascetic order.

In the two *mūla-sūtras*, *Uttar-ādhyayana* and *Daśa-vaikālika*, one gets plenty of material shedding light on the basic ideas of Mahāvīra on philosophy, morality and conduct. The *Kalpa-sūtra* gives a well-arranged biography of Mahāvīra. This entire literature is presented through the later Ardha-māgadhī language. In the *Āvaśyaka-cūrṇi* also we get some useful details about Mahāvīra. (Sholapur, 1952).

The *Tiloya-paṇṇattī* (*Triloka-prajñapti*) of Yati-vṛṣabha (in Śauraseni Prakrit) is very important, because in its Prakrit *gāthās* we find the biographies (in the form of *nāmāvali*) of Tīrthakaras and other *śalākā-puruṣas*. Here one gets, in brief, almost all the events connected with the life of Mahāvīra, in a form very convenient to memorise

Based on such material, preserved in strings of names (*nāmāvali-baddha*) is composed the *Pauma-cariya*, the earliest known *mahākāvya* in (Mahārāṣṭrī) Prakrit in which appears a short biography of Mahāvīra by way of introduction to the life and activities of Rāma (Bhavnagar, 1914). The *Vasudeva-hiṇḍi* (Bhavnagar, 1930-31) of Saṁgha-dāsa and Dharma-dāsa-gaṇi (4-5th century A.D.) is an important work in Prākrit narrative literature. Incidentally the lives of many Tīrtha-karas, including that of Mahāvīra too, are touched upon here and there. The *Cauppaṇṇa-mahāpurisa-cariya* (V.S. 925; Varanasi, 1961) of Śīlāṅka gives in Prakrit prose the bio-graphy of Mahāvīra (among those of others). Bhadreśvara's *Kahāvali* (12th century A.D.) gives in Prākrit prose the lives of 63 *śalākā-puruṣas*.

As an independent composition, solely devoted to the life of Mahāvīra, is the *Mahāvīra-cariya* (Bombay, 1929) of Guṇa-

candra-sūri (V.S. 1139). It has eight *prastāvas*, of which the first four are devoted to the details of the earlier births of Mahāvīra. Devendra alias Nemi-candra-sūri, a contemporary of Guṇa-candra, has composed the *Mahāvīra-cariya* (V.S. 1141, Bhavanagar; V.S. 1973) entirely in Prakrit verses, nearly 2400 in number, which describe 26 births (*bhava*) from that of Marīci to the one of Mahāvīra. Just some years later (V.S. 1168) Deva-bhadra-gaṇi too composed Mahāvīra-cariya (Ahmedabad 1945).

(b) Biographies of Mahāvīra in Sanskrit

Leaving the doctrinal text, namely the *Tattvārtha-sūtra*, the Sanskrit language was used in Jaina literature much later than expected. Of course, there is Siddhasena Divākara who has addressed the first five of his hymns to Mahāvīra. Among the earlier Sanskrit compositions there is the stylistic *dharma-kathā*, namely the *Varāṅga-carita* of Jaṭila or Jaṭācārya, and the *Padma-carita* of Raviṣeṇa (676 A.D.); both of them earlier than the *Kuvalaya-mālā* (A.D. 779).

Jinasena and his pupil Guṇabhadra had their *Mahā-purāṇa* (in Sanskrit) completed in *c*. Śaka 820. It deals thoroughly and exhaustively with the lives of Tīrthakaras. The first 46 *parvans* are known by the title *ādi-purāṇa* which covers the biographies of *Ṛṣabha-deva* and Bharata, who are respectively the first Tīrthakara and first Cakravartin. The *parvans* 47-76 are called *Uttara-purāṇa* (Varanasi, 1954; now New Delhi). It is composed by Guṇa-bhadra; and it covers the lives of remaining 23 Tīrthakaras and the rest of *Śalākā-puruṣas*. Here the life of Mahāvīra is described in the concluding three *parvans* (74-76) in nice verses, the total number of which comes to 549 + 691 + 578 = 1818.

About two hundred seventy-five years later, Hemacandra composed an extensive *Triṣaṣṭi-śalākā-puruṣa-carita* (Bhavnagar, 1913) in ten *parvans*, the last *parvan* being devoted to the life of Mahāvīra. Meru-tuṅga has written the *Mahā-puruṣa-carita* with *svopajña* commentary (c. 1300 A.D.) the five

cantos of which cover respectively the lives of Ṛṣabha. Śānti, Nami, Pārśva and Mahāvīra.

As an elegant *kāvya*, deserves to be mentioned the *Vardhamāna-carita* (Śaka 913) of Asaga (Sholapur, 1931) : here too sixteen cantos are given to the former births of Mahāvīra and only the last two for his present career. Sakala-kīrti composed the *Vardhamāna-purāṇa* in nineteen cantos in the V.S. 1518. There are references to the *Mahāvīra-caritra* in Sanskrit attributed to Padma-nandin, Keśava and Vāṇī-vallabha.

(c) Mahāvīra's Biographies in Apabhramsa

The *Mahāpurāṇu* (Śaka 887) of Puṣpadanta in Apabhramsa is a great poem, quite extensive and rich with all the poetic merits; and it deals with the lives of all the Tīrthakaras and other *śalākā-puruṣas*. It has 102 *sandhis*. The life of Mahāvīra is covered there from *sandhi* 65 onwards up to the end (Bombay, 1914). Śrīdhara has presented the life of Mahāvīra in an independent work. His other work, *Pāsa-ṇāha-cariu* was completed in V.S. 1189; and some time about this period he might have composed this work too.

Śrīdhara's Apabhramsa works hava a special attraction for us, because he has disclosed that he was a resident of Hariyāṇā. The term *Hariyāṇā* is the corrupt form of *Ābhīrakāṇām*; so it is the land of the Ābhīra clan; and, according to Daṇḍin, author of the *Kāvy-ādarśa*, it is from the speech of Ābhīras and others that the Apabhramsa style developed. It can be said, therefore, that the tradition of Apabhramsa composition continued in Hariyāṇā from 5-6th century to 12th century A.D. It is very important from the linguistic and historical point of view that a search is instituted for the works of other poets and, on the basis of them, the local dialects are studied comparatively.

During the reign of Tomara rulers of Gwalior, namely, Dūṁgara-siṁha and his son Kīrti-siṁha, the great poet Raidhū (*c.* V.S. 1500) has enriched Apabhramsa literature by

many of his works. His *Sammai-cariu* is complete in ten *sandhis*. The exact date of the *Vaḍḍhamāṇa-kahā* of Narasena is not known; but a Ms. of his another work *Siri-vāla-cariu*, is dated in V.S. 1512; so it must have been composed some time before this period.

A Ms. of the *Vaḍḍhamāṇa-kavvu* of Jayamitra Halla is dated V.S. 1545. At the close of the work Padmanandi-muni is mentioned; perhaps he is the same as the pupil of Prabhācandra Bhaṭṭāraka who is mentioned in some records from V.S. 1385 to 1450. The poet calls his composition *Holi-vamma-kaṇṇ-ābharaṇa*, and he looks upon Harīndu or Hariścandra as his Guru. It was a matter of surprise that *saṁdhis* 4-5 were wanting in the available Mss.[12] But now Pt. Hiralal Shastri (now no more) of Beawar has been able to spot a Ms. which has got these missing *saṁdhis*. They are being included in an edition to be brought out by (Dr.) Pt. Nemichandra Shastri.

(d) Mahāvīra's Biographies in Kannada

Asaga's *Vardhamāna-purāṇa* (in Sanskrit) has been a source of inspiration to a number of Kannada poets. Asaga is often spelt as Agasa and some time taken to mean a *rajaka* in Kannada; but the real name appears to have been Asaṅga of which Asaga can be a popular pronunciation. Very lately has come to light a single Ms. of *Vīra-Vardhamāna-purāṇa* of *Nāga-varman* (II). It has sixteen cantos and deals with the earlier births and the present career of Mahāvīra. It is a stylistic *campū-kāvya*, and uses some of the Sanskrit metrical forms quite freely. It was composed in 1042 A.D.

Then there is the *Vardhamāna-purāṇa* of Ācaṇṇa who had a title Vāṇīvallabha. This also has sixteen cantos and presented in the *campū* style reminding us of Sanskrit *kāvyas*. It is characterised by many a poetic embellishment. It is assigned to *c*. 1195. There is also the *Vardhamāna-carite* in 12 cantos,

[12] Harivaṁśa Kochhar, *Apabhraṁsa Sāhitya*. Paramananda Shastri, *Jaina Grantha Praśasti Saṅgraha, bhāga* II, 'Apabhramsa Grantha'.

written in the popular Sāṅgatya metre. It was composed by Padma-kavi in A.D. 1528.

(e) Mahāvīra in the Tri-piṭaka and Pāli Literature

There is no specific mention of Buddha in any Jaina canonical texts. But in the *Tri-piṭaka* of Buddhists there are many references to Mahāvīra and his preachings under the name Nigaṁṭha Nāṭaputta (Nirgrantha Jñātṛputra).

This has been noted nearly a century back when the Buddhist and Jaina canonical texts were brought to light by the Pali Text Society, London and the Sacred Books of the East Series. When Dr. H. Jacobi translated into English the *Ācārāṅga*, *Kalpa-sūtra*, *Uttar-ādhyayana* and *Sūtra-kṛtāṅga* (S.B.E., 22 & 45), in the Introductions of these two volumes he drew the attention of scholars to those contexts of the Pali literature in which Nigaṁṭha Nāṭa-putta was mentioned. Later such contexts were more exhaustively studied; and lately, Muni Nagaraj has collected some such 42 Pāli passages, short and long, in his *Āgama aura Tripiṭaka : Eka Anuśīlana* (in three parts; Calcutta, 1969; now its translation into English has also been brought out).

From these it is clearly proved that both these great men (Mahāvīra and Buddha) were contemporaries, that Mahāvīra was the senior of the two, and that he attained *nirvāṇa* earlier than Buddha. After a good deal of critical scrutiny it is proved that the date of the *nirvāṇa* of Mahāvīra is 527 B.C.

MAHĀVĪRA
HIS PHILOSOPHY OF LIFE

15. The Priest and the Recluse

The quest for the Higher on an intellectual or metaphysical plane has been all along, in India, the privilege or province of some outstanding individual or individuals, while the mass of the population, generally steeped in ignorance and poverty, was devoted to crude deification and ancestor-worship. The power of a religious leader lay in his ability to win over to his creed the people around him. In India there have been two types of religious leaders: the priest and the ascetic.

The priest was a champion of ritualism. He 'vigorously claimed that the welfare and indeed the very existence of the world, including even the gods, depended upon the maintenance of their systems of sacrifice, which grew to immense size and complexity.' The cults popularised by him were polytheistic; the deities were very often forces of nature; and man was put at their utter mercy, the priest alone being capable of saving him by seeking the favour of the deities through sacrificial rites.

This is the line of thought of the Vedic religion and its coustodians. It came into India from outside, from the North-West. And, thanks to the mesmeric power exerted by elaborate ritual, it gradually spread towards the East and the South, catching handfuls of followers here and there.

16. Thought-ferment in Eastern India

As distinguished from this, in the East, along the fertile banks of the Ganges and Jumna, there flourished in India a

succession of ascetic Teachers, who, hailing from rich families, had enough leisure for high thinking and religious meditation.

For them, the spirit in man, and also in all animate beings, was the focus of religious meditation as well as an object of investigation in relation to all that is inanimate in the universe.

This brought them face to face with the problem of life here and elsewhere, since both spirit and matter were real for them—real, and therefore essentially eternal, though passing through the flux of change.

Life here and hereafter was the result of the beginningless connection between spirit and matter, which was the source of all the misery in this world; and the aim of religion was to separate matter from spirit, so that the latter might achieve a state of liberation in which it would exist in a plenitude of purity, bliss and knowledge.

Man is his own master; his thoughts, words and acts have made him, and coutinue to make him, what he is; it is in his hands to make or mar his present or future; the great Teachers of the past are his ideals to inspire him along the path of religion; and he has to struggle, with hope, on the well-trodden path of spiritual progress, following a code of moral and ascetic discipline, till he reaches the goal of spiritual emancipation or perfection.

Thus it will be seen that here, in the Eastern stream of religious thought, there is no place either for a Deity who shapes the universe and meddles in its matters, or for a priest invested with mysterious powers to propitiate Him.

This line of thought is well represented by Jaina Tīrthakaras like Neminātha, Pārśva and Mahāvīra, by Ājīvika Teachers like Gośāla, by Sāṅkhya philosophers like Kapila and promulgators of Buddhism like Buddha.

With the political freedom of our land, there is great enthusiasm all over the country, particularly patent and eloquent among the educated classes who have started

revaluing the ancient Indian heritage in a new perspective. It is in the fitness of things that great personalities like Mahāvira and Buddha are remembered with reverence in this context.

I have often wondered how these great Teachers, whose preachings have such an abiding human appeal, could have been somewhat neglected for some time in the very land which they enriched and elevated in its moral stature. It is, however, a happy augury that their greatness is being appreaciated today all the more.

As usual, it is an irony with us, that Western scholarship has to make us aware of the greatness of our men and matters. Very valuable work in the fields of Jaina and Buddhist literatures was done by Western savants; and today, we are in a position to appreciate the greatness of Mahāvira and Buddha, better than we could do in earlier days.

17. Mahāvīra : His Age

The 2500th Parinirvāṇa Day of Buddha was celebrated some years back; and now (1974-75) that of Mahāvira is being celebrated all over the country and even outside. And it is but natural that we should study and understand in detail the personality of and principles preached by Mahāvira.

Mahāvira was a contemporary of Buddha, and he stands as the 24th Tīrthakara whose preaching fully breathe the spirit of what I have called the Eastern stream of thought in India. All that Mahāvīra and his predecessors have preached goes under the name of Jainism today, but that should not come in the way of our appreciating and putting into practice the great principles preached by Mahāvīra which stand today embedded and elaborately interpreted in Jaina literature in different languages.

Those of you who have visited Bihar can testify to the fertility of that part of India; but more than that, in the history of Indian thought and culture Bihar has played an important

role. The great champions of *Ātma*-philosophy, like Buddha, Janaka and Mahāvīra hail from this part. It is Mīthilā in Bihar that has made substantial contributions to Mīmāṁsā, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika systems. Some 2500 years ago, Vaiśālī (modern Basārh, some 45 kms. to the north of Patna) was a prosperous capital. A suburb of it was called Kuṇḍalapura or Kṣatriyakuṇḍa; and here in the palace of king Siddhārtha, of his queen Triśalā or Priyakāriṇī, Mahāvīra was born : to emphasise his various outstanding traits. He was also known as Jñāta-putra, Vaiśālīya, Vardhamāna, Sanmati, etc.

His mother belonged to the family of Ceṭaka, the mighty Licchavi ruler of Videha at whose call Licchavis and Mallas co-operated both for defence and offence. Tradition is not unanimous about his marriage: according to the one, he was a celibate throughout; while according to another, he married Yaśodā and had a daughter called Priyadarśanā. As a prince having excellent connections with ruling dynasties of his times, it was expected of him to rule with authority and enjoy the pleasures of a prosperous career after his father. But that was not to be.

Just at the age of 30, Mahāvīra decided like a hero to relinquish the comforts of a princely life and undertook the life of an ascetic with a view to attaining spiritual happiness, and thus place before the world the correct values of life and an example of his having solved its problems in a successful manner. Attachment and possessive instincts have been the greatest obstacles in the attainment of spiritual peace and purification; and he gave them up in an ideal manner. Physical comforts are not an end in themselves; and Mahāvīra became a *nirgrantha*, and went about practising severe penances, even without any clothes on his body.

We have graphic description of his hardships given in detail in the *Ācārāṅga*, etc.: people abused him, boys pelted him with stones, and thus he was subjected to many calamities in the Eastern part of Bengal. After twelve years of rigorous penances, Mahāvīra had a triumph over physical weaknesses

and limitations; and he attained pure and perfect knowledge which transcended the limits of space and time : he became a *kevalin*, a *sarvajña*.

Śreṇika Ḅimbasāra was his contemporary and was ruling at Rājagṛha: Mahāvīra delivered his first sermon on the hill Vipul-ācala in the vicinity of Rājagṛha. For full thirty years he visited different parts of the country; and it was his *vihāra*, or religious tour, as well as that of Buddha, that gave Magadhan territory the name of Bihar.

Mahāvīra's parents belonged to the school of Pārśva; during his *vihāra*, Mahāvīra explained to his society various problems of life and their solutions. He laid maximum stress on the sanctity and dignity of the spirit, and his preachings were meant for one and all who conformed to the religious discipline outlined by him.

The organisation of his followers, including princes as well as poor peasants. conformed to the fourfold pattern consisting of monks (*muni*), nuns (*āryikā*), householders (*śrāvaka*) and houseladies (*srāvikā*); this nomenclature continues in Jainism even to this day.

The influence of the great principles preached by Mahāvīra is seen in India even outside Jainism. He was a Tīrthakara, who prepared a ford for the suffering humanity to achieve peace here and bliss elsewhere. In view of the all-embracing character of Mahāvīra's principles, Samantabhadra, an illustrious ascetic philosopher, as early as *c.* 2nd century A.D., called the *tīrtha* of Mahāvīra by the name *sarvodaya*, which term is so commonly used nowadays after Gandhiji. At the age of 72, Mahāvīra attained *nirvāṇa* at Pāvā in 527 B.C.; and this day is celebrated with lights all over India as the Dīvālī day.

A large amount of literature, both ancient and modern, is available on the life and activities of Mahāvīra ; and many myths, miracles and legends have grown about his personality, as usual with all religious dignitaries. Scientific and historical scrutiny unaffected by sectarian prejudice and

religious bias is made difficult by the very nature of the sources from which the information has to be gleaned.

What I have attempted above is a bare outline of Mahāvīra's biography. If it is difficult, or beyond the means of historical study, to know all about Mahāvīra, in my humble opinion, it is more important to understand and put into practice the principles preached by Mahāvīra than to discuss this detail or that about his personal life.

In this connection, I would make a little digression on some aspects of Vaiśālī (spelt as Vaishali), the birthplace of Mahāvīra. The town was at its height of prospertiy, and by its association with Mahāvīra it became far-famed in the religious world of India. Teachers from Vaishali preached great principles for the uplift of humanity and lived an austere life of fasts and penances: and Mahāvīra stood out as the most prominent of his contemporaries.

According to the *Mahā-vastu*, Buddha sought his first teachers in Alāra and Uddaka at Vaishali and 'even started his life as a Jain under their teachings.' After discovering his Middle Path, he became more and more honoured at Vaishali, receiving even royal reception; the city built for him a *kūṭāgāra-śālā*, a pinnacled rest house, in its suburban park known as the Mahā-vana. It is at Vaishali that the Second Buddhist Council was held; and it came to be looked upon as a holy spot where differences in the *Saṅgha* could be ironed out. His celebrated disciple Āmra-pālī was a resident of Vaishali at which place she bequeathed her park to Buddha and the community.

Vaishali had its political significance too. It had a republican government, and king Ceṭaka, the Licchavi republican president, 'organized a federation of republics comprising Mallakīs, and 18 *gaṇa-rājas* of Kāśī-kosala, besides the 9 Licchavi republics.' The working of the Vajjian confederation, so vividly described in the *Dīgha-nikāya*, is an unique example of its king and essentially contributed to the efficiency and solidarity of the republic. Further, Vaishali was a commercial

capital where seals were issued by three classes of guilds, namely, Bankers, Traders and Artisans. When Fa-Hien visited India (A.D. 399-414), it was an important religious, political and commercial centre; but its fall began in the next three centuries, and what Hiuen-Tsang (A.D. 635) saw there was more or less in ruins. And today it is a neglected village.

The Indian Republic of today has inherited a great deal from the spirit of Vaishali, and the Vajjian concord is the pedestal of our Democracy, apart from the fact that *ahiṁsā* with its corollaries, viz., *Padñca-śīlas*, is the bed-rock on which our policies are built. By eucouraging the state languages, our Central Government is only carrying on the policy of Magadhan Governments which gave more importance to the language of the masses than to that of the classes. The inscriptions of Aśoka are all in Prakrit. The late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru used to say that he can find time to meet the humblest in the country even in preference to his big officials. This reminds us of Aśoka, the *priya-darśin*, who has a similar dictum.

Thus it is but natural that Vaishali can no more be neglected. Thanks to the vigilant eye of the Central Government, patronage of the Bihar Government, princely gifts of enlightened industrialists like Shri Shantiprasadji and the active efforts of the Vaishali Sangh with its able workers like Shri J.C. Mathur, Vaishali is rising up again. The Bihar Government has been running a Post-graduate Institute there for Prakrit and Jaina studies.

Through the ravages of time and tide, and due to political vicissitudes Vaishali fell into ruins; and we had nearly forgotten its identity. But you will be pleased to hear that Vaishali has not forgotten its worthy sons. Among the Jaina and Buddhist relics, the most important remnant is a plot of fertile land, owned by a local significant family of Siṁha or Nātha Kṣatriyas, which is never cultivated, as far as the family memory goes, because for generations it is believed in the family that on that spot Mahāvīra was born and hence it is too sacred to be cultivated. It is a remarkable event in

the religious history of India that the memory of Mahāvīra is so concretely kept at his birth place by his kinsmen though 2500 years have quietly elapsed.

The period in which Mahāvīra lived was undoubtedly an age of acute intellectual upheaval in the cultural history of India; and among his contemporaries there were such religious teachers as Keśa-kambalin, Makkhali Gosāla, Pakuddha Kaccāyana, Purāṇa Kassapa, Saṁjaya Belaṭṭhiputta and Tathāgata Buddha. Mahāvīra inherited a good deal from earlier Tīrthakaras. He left behind not only a systematic religion and philosophy but also a well-knit social order of ascetics and lay followers who earnestly followed and practised what he and his immediate disciples preached.

Buddha and Mahāvīra lived in the same age and moved about in the same area with the same dynasties and rulers in view. They stressed the dignity of man as man, and preached to the masses in their own language high moral ideals which advanced the individual on the spiritual plane and further contributed to social solidarity. To posterity, they are the best representatives of the Eastern or Magadhan religion, of what is generally called the Śramaṇic culture; the basic literature embodying their utterances, has luckily survived to us.

A comparative study of the early Jaina and Buddhist works presents a remarkable similarity and breathes verily the same religious and moral spirit which has not only stood the test of time for the last two thousand years and more but is also serving today as the master key to the solution of many a human problem. Truth and non-violence as preached and practised by Mahātmā Gandhi can be better appreciated against the background of the moral code preached by Mahāvīra and Buddha. The references to the *nirgrantha* tenets in the Pāli canon are of great value for assessing the relation of Jainism and Buddhism.

Apparently there was so much in common between Buddha and Mahāvīra, that early European scholars mistook them for one individual. But today, with the progress of studies,

they stand before us as two distinct personalities who have left an abiding influence on the history of Indian thought. Buddha, it has to be noted, experimented with many teachers prior to his enlightenment, and discovered the Middle Path, after rejecting much of the religious thought current round about him.

That was not the case with Mahāvīra. The religion preached by Vṛṣabha, Neminātha and his immediate predecessor Pārśva (who flourished just a couple of centuries before Mahāvīra) was already inherited by him and he presented it for contemporary society.

Buddha is less compromising with the creeds of his contemporaries, because he started with the conviction that he had personally discovered something new for humanity. But Mahāvīra was more accommodating and compromising and quite willing to understand the point of view of others, primarily because he was preaching an earlier religion, maybe for a slightly different order of monks and laymen. 'It is evident', as Jacobi has remarked, 'that both Mahāvīra and Buddha have made use of the interest and support of their families to propagate their Order. Their prevalence over other rivals was certainly due in some degree to their connection with the chief families of the country'. Buddha had a longer lease of life: he lived for full eighty years, while Mahāvīra lived only 72 years. The middle path of Buddha struck a note of novelty and inspired so much enthusiasm among his new followers that its influence spread far and wide. Mahāvīra, however, had to preach both to old and new followers, and obviously he must have been guided by a spirit of compromise; the question of new recruits was not with him as urgent as it was with Buddha. There is evidence, further confirmed by close similarity between Jaina and Buddhist monastic rules, that Buddha did try the *nirgrantha* way of living for a while, obviously the one preached long before by Pārśvanātha. As observed by Jacobi 'Nigaṁṭhas (*nirgranthas*), now better known under the name of Jainas or Arhatas, already existed as an important sect at the time

when the Buddhist church was being founded.' The Pāli canon refers to Mahāvīra as Nigaṁṭha Nāṭaputta.

Both Mahāvīra and Buddha thus started their careers with the same capital of Śramaṇic ideology, but differed later on in details, and so also their followers with changing times and places.

The subsequent history of Jainism and Buddhism, the former confining itself primarily to India but still surviving as a living institution and the latter spreading with remarkable zeal practically all over the Eastern hemisphere but losing its bearings in the very land of its birth, has its seeds to be sought in their earlier beginnings outlined above. It is absolutely necessary that the doctrines of Buddha and Mahāvīra be studies in more detail than is done ordinarily by the educated man.

18. Mahāvīra's Heritage : Jaina Literature

The history of the Jaina Church has many a bright spot here and there. After Mahāvīra the Church was led by a series of eminent monks and received patronage from kings like Śreṇika Bimbisāra, Chandragupta Maurya, etc. Many religious monks, ruling dynasties, wealthy traders and pious families have contributed to the stability and continuity of the Jaina church with the result that India can feel proud of the Jaina contributions both to its civilization and culture in matters of art, architecture, literature, and moral code.

The preachings of Mahāvīra are embedded in the canonical texts, and they are interpreted by series of commentaries known as *niryuktis*, *bhāṣyas* and *ṭīkās*. Individual topics are discussed in manuals and further illustrated by extensive narrative literature. The doctrines are logically defended by a number of authors in comparison with and contrast to other Indian systems.

Jaina contributions to Indian literature embrace various subjects; and they are spread in different languages like the Prakrits (including Apabhramsa), Sanskrit, Tamil, Kannada,

Old Hindi, Old Gujarati, etc. Jaina authors have considered language only as means to an end; they never invested any one language with religious sanctity. Thanks to their broad outlook, they could make salient contributions to Sanskrit and Prakrit; and how they have enriched Tamil and Kannada, at least the learned readers here need no further elaboration from me.

Bühler wrote many years back about Jaina literature in this manner: 'In grammar, in astronomy as well as in branches of *belles-lettres* the achievements of Jainas have been so great that even their opponents have taken notice of them and that some of their works are of importance for European science even today. In the South where they have worked among the Dravidian peoples, they have also promoted the development of these languages. The Kanarese, Tamil and Telugu literary languages rest on the foundations erected by the Jaina monks. Though this activity has led them far away from their own particular aims, yet it has secured for them an important place in the history of Indian literature and civilization'. This prophetic observation of that great German scholar is not only fully borne out, but later finds and researches have also shown that if Bühler had lived today, he would have been more eloquent on the Jaina contributions to Indian literature.

With such meticulous care and perseverance the Jainas have preserved Ms. collections in places like Jaisalmer, Jaipur, Pattan and Moodbidri that these are a part of our national wealth. They built these collections with such an academic and catholic outlook, that there was hardly any place for religious bias. It must be said to the credit of the builders of the great collections at Jaisalmer and Pattan that it is here that we could trace certain original Buddhist works which otherwise were known to us only from Tibetan translations.

19. Mahāvīra : His Philosophy of Life

A dispassionate and critical study of Jaina literature enables one to get a fair idea of the Jaina outlook or view of life. By

the Jaina view of life we mean the view of life sanctioned by Jainism as apparent from an objective and judicious interpretation of the fundamentals of Jaina metaphysics and ethics, and not the outlook on life which the followers of Jainism generally have today.

Metaphysically speaking, all souls, according to their stage of spiritual evolution or progress (in terms of *guṇa-sthānas*) have a legitimate place on the path of religion; everyone's position is determined by his *karmic* limitations, and his progress depends on his potentialities.

The Jaina God is neither a creator of the universe nor a dispenser of favours and frowns. He is a spiritual ideal, but also a being who has reached absolute perfection. He is praised and worshipped, it is with a view to remembering his virtues, so that we may cultivate them in ourselves and attain the same status. Every soul must reap the fruits, pleasant or painful, of all it has done; for it is, in the last analysis, the architect of its own fortune. The question of exchanging one's sins or merits with any other soul is irrelevant.

Now, clearly such an attitude does not leave one at the marcy of an outside agency, divine or semi-divine, and enables one to work with confidence and hope. The individual, however criminal under the stress of internal and external forces, need not despair because he is latently divine and a day will come when he will realize himself.

Jainism lays down certain ethical standards, which are duly graded, for the uplift of the individual as a social being. As long as he lives as a member of society, besides what he owes to himself for his spiritual betterment, he owes a good deal to the society in which he is living; but if he relinquishes the world and leads the life of an ascetic, his ties with society and his responsibilities towards it are considerably reduced. In Jainism, the duties of a householder are in miniature those of a monk; and a householder, while duly carrying out his household duties, rises steadily to the status of a monk.

Ahiṁsā is the most important principle that permeates the Jaina outlook on life. In simple language it means the greatest possible kindness towards the animate world. Jainism has prepared a graded series of living beings; and a religious person has to strive his best to minimize harm to them.

Every living being has a sanctity and a dignity of its own, and one has to respect it as one expects one's own dignity to be respected. A man of kindly temperament sheds around him an atmosphere of kindness.

Jainism has firmly held that life is sacred irrespective of species, caste, colour, creed or nationality. A resident of Hiroshima or Nagasaki is as sacred as one in New York or London: what his colour is, what he eats, and how he dresses—these are external adjuncts.

Thus the practice of *ahiṁsā* is both an individual and a collective virtue; and this kindly attitude, which requires that our hearts be free from baser impulses like anger, pride, hypocrisy, greed, envy and contempt, has a positive force and a universal appeal.

The second virtue which Jaina ethics lays stress on is good neighbourliness; one should speak the truth and respect the right of property. It is thus that one becomes trustworthy in society, and at the same time creates and atmosphere of security for others.

One's thought, words and acts must be consistent with each other; and they must, further, create an atmosphere of confidence and safety round about. It is no use being untrue to one's immediate neighbour and pretending to be highly cosmopolitan and benevolent towards people living beyond the seas.

Individual kindliness, mutual confidence and a reciprocal sense of security must start with the immediate neighbour and then be gradually diffused in society at large, not only in theory but also in practice.

These virtues can go to constitute coherent social and political groups of worthy citizens who yearn for peaceful coexistence with the well-being of the entire humanity in view.

The third virtue is a steady and progressive restraint on acquisitiveness which manifests itself either in the from of yearning for sensual or sex pleasure, or for acquisition of property. This virtue is to be practised in different degrees at different stages of one's spiritual or religious progress.

An ideally religious man is entirely free from acquisitiveness in thought, word and deed; his last vestige or property is his body alone, and his wants are the minimum required to sustain it; and this too he voluntarily relinquishes in the end when he finds that it gives him no more aid in the practice of religion.

Pursuit of pleasure is an endless game; individual inclinations and passions must be duly trained and curbed; thus indeed does one get mental poise and spiritual balance. A voluntary limitation of property is a community virtue which results in social justice and fair distribution of utility commodities.

The strong and the rich should not weed out the weak and the poor but put such voluntary restricition on their instincts and possessions that the under-privileged too have a fair chance in life.

Any attempt to enforce these qualities by an external and legal authority, either on the individual or society, will lead to hypocrisy or secret criminal tendencies. It is for sensible individuals to practise these virtues, and thus set an example from which an enlightened society will gradually be developed.

There are many elements which go to constitute the intellectual make-up of an individual: his inheritance, environment, upbringing, studies and experiences. It is this intellectual make up that shapes his convictions and opinions; if he lacks in intellectual honesty and integrity of expression, these latter may get perverted.

All these, moreover, get a different colouring according to the motives and ambitions of individuals, singly or collectively. This is why one finds that unanimity of opinion

or agreement in views is very scarce. For most of us, even presuming that all of us are sincere, it is easier, nay, almost natural, to differ rather than agree on any given topic.

To meet this situation, Jainism has presented to the world two significant instruments of understanding and expression: one is the *Naya-vāda* and the other, *Syād-vāda*. The *Naya-vāda* enables one to analyse the various points of view and appraise their relative validity : it is a remarkable method for the analytical comprehension of a complex question. *Naya* is a particular approach. It reveals a partial or a particular view of the totality, and it should not be mistaken for the whole.

A synthesis of these different viewpoints is an imperative necessity; therein every viewpoint must retain its relative position; and this need is fulfilled by *Syād-vāda*. One can say 'yes' or say 'no' or even express one's inability to state anything: these three basic statements, when combined, can give rise to seven predications which are qualified by the term *syāt* or 'maybe', indicating the limits of understanding and expression. *Syād-vāda*, in course of the process of assertion or denial, curbs down and harmonises the absolute viewpoints of individual *nayas*.

'*Syād-vāda*,' says Professor A.B. Dhruva, 'is not a doctrine of speculative interest, one intended to solve a mere ontological problem, but has a bearing upon man's psychological and spiritual life.' It has supplied the philosopher with catholicity of thought, convincing him that Truth is not anybody's monopoly with tariff walls of denominational religion, while furnishing the religious aspirant with the virtue of intellectual toleration which is a part of that *ahiṁsā* which is one of the fundamental tenets of Jainism.

Human beings have limited knowledge and inadquate expression. That is why different doctrines are inadequate; at the most they are one-sided views of the Truth which cannot be duly enclosed in words and concepts. Jainism has always held that it is wrong, if not dangerous to presume that one's own creed alone represents the truth.

Toleration is, therefore, the characteristic of Jaina ideology. Even the Jaina monarchs and generals have a clean and commendable record to their credit in this regard. The political history of India knows no cases of persecution by Jaina kings, even when Jaina monks and laymen have suffered at the hands of other religionists of fanatical temper.

Dr. Saletore has rightly observed, 'The principle of *ahiṁsā* was partly responsible for the greatest contribution of the Jainas to Hindu culture—that relating to toleration. Whatever may be said concerning the rigidity with which they maintained their religious tenets and the tenacity and skill with which they met and defeated their opponent in religious disputations, yet it cannot be denied that the Jainas fostered the principle of toleration more sincerely and at the time more successfully than any other community in India.'

Time was when man was at the mercy of nature; today, however, he has dived deep into the mysteries of nature and become her slave. There is such rapid progress in the various branches of science; and the scientist's achievements in nuclear physics and atomic weapons are so astounding that, if he so intends, he can destroy the entire human race and change the face of the earth. Thus, today, the human race is standing on the verge of catastrophe; its mind is getting befogged and bewildered; and it is rushing towards the very precipice which it wants to avoid. Obviously, we are required to revalue our values.

The progress of science is the corollary of an attempt to achieve greater happiness for man. But, unfortunately, man as man is not properly understood; and there is, too, a great deal of international misuse of language.

By the term 'man' many have only 'the white man' in view; and such an attitude is subversive of all ethical standards. If some parts of the world are apparently more civilized, very often it is at the cost of the other parts. Cooperative and collective amelioration of the entire mankind has to take the place of colonial exploitation. The sanctity and dignity of mankind have to be recognized in preference to our separate

affluence and supremacy. Scientific skill must be accompained by a saint's wisdom. Thus man has to understand man as man.

In this technically unified world, there is very little difference between oneself and others; If I wish well to myself, that is practicable, only if I wish well to others. The doctrine of *ahiṁsā*, if rightly understood and sincerely practised, supplies the necessary basis for this humanitarian outlook of a world-citizen.

The organized atrocities of man need not make up despair. The doctrine of *karma* tells us that we are the architects of our own fortune. It is for us to look into ourselves, analyse our objectives, both individually and collectively, without slavishly prostrating ourselves before any power for fear or favour; and thus work on with confidence and hope that man must progress for his existence and betterment.

Every individual has the potentiality of the divine, and it is for him to realise this by following the path of religion. Physical science and technical skill have given us power, and it is for us now to choose whether we want to make forward progress for the betterment of man and his environment or just reduce ourselves to a heap of radio-active ashes.

Good neighbourliness and restraint on the acquisitive instinct are a contagious virtue; what is true of an individual is also true of a group, social or political. The man who does not know himself and refuses to know another man as man can never live at peace with himself or, obviously, at peace with others. A clear understanding of oneself and of others can alone remove mutual suspicion and counter-balance the constant threat of war, thus leading us to a true condition of peaceful coexistence.

20. To Conclude

Today, liberty of thought and speech is increasingly getting crippled in a subtle manner. Tendentious propaganda not

only conceals but also perverts the apparent facts, and the world is put on a wrong track. This means that the thinking man has to keep himself vigilant, understand the limitations of his knowledge and thus learn to respect the viewpoint of others, as laid down by *naya-vāda* and *syād-vāda*.

Let us not lose faith in man as man, and let us learn to respect each other as man. We must see that man lives under healthy and progressive conditions as a world-citizen.

The basic principles of Jainism (such as *ahiṁsā*, *anekānta* and *aparigraha*), if correctly understood and earnestly put into practice, can make one a worthy citizen of the world.



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